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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

READING HABITS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS

BY

DOUGLAS PHILIP SANSOM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT, CAREER AND

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

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FALL/1993

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance a thesis entitled Reading Habits of Adult Basic Education Students submitted by Douglas **Philip** Sansom in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

Grace V. Malicky

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Date: 28 July 1993

ABSTRACT

Only minor differences were found after comparing the self-reported reading habits of short and long-term participants in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program at a large urban centre in Alberta. Using six two part, open-ended questions, 22 volunteers were interviewed about their reading habits at home and at other places: what they read, for how long, for what purposes, where they acquired their materials, what kind of reading they considered important, and what reading they still wanted to learn.

Two demographically similar groups were defined by the length of time volunteers had attended the Centre. Eleven newly enroled students made up the Beginners' group and eleven who had attended 18 or more weeks comprised the Veterans' group.

Each group consisted of nine females and two males. Their age ranges and means were similar, though the Veterans were older, had more dependents, fewer jobs, fractionally more years of grade school attendance and were about one level higher in the program (7.5 to 6.6).

The data collected were sorted and categorized into tables and the reported reading habits compared. Results were analyzed by setting and by group. The results were also related and compared to other studies reported in the literature.

When the Veterans were compared to the Beginners using the most commonly reported categories of responses, the two groups were found to be almost indistinguishable. Veterans tended to spend more time reading schoolwork and newspapers and to have more items delivered to their homes. Beginners spent more time per day reading books and accessed more free materials for use at home. Only the differences in schoolwork

could perhaps be correlated with long-term participation in ABE.

Both groups' reading habits compared favorably to those commonly reported in the literature in that they reported reading books, magazines and newspapers for one to eight hours per day for enjoyment and/or for information using purchased and/or borrowed materials. In contrast to some studies, these groups read more at home than at other places.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION 1
The Problem 4
Delimitations 4
Definitions 5
Need for the Study 6

2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY 7
What People Read 7
How Much Time People Read 11
Age 11
Gender 13
Setting and Changing Daily Requirements .. 13
Education 14
Socio-economic Status 14
Why People Read 15
For Pleasure 15
For Knowledge/Understanding 16
For Functional Purposes 16
Where People Get Reading Materials 18
Type of Reading Considered Most Important 20
What Reading People Want to Learn to Do 22
Summary 24

3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES 25
Sampling 25
Criteria for Sample Selection 25
Identifying the Sample 26
Nature of the Sample 27
The Instrument 32
Rationale for the Instrument 32
Description of the Instrument 33
Piloting the Instrument 34
Collecting the Data 34
Analysis of the Data 36

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 37
Question 1: What People Read 37
Categories of Responses 37
Results 41
Discussion 42
Question 2: Time Spent Reading 45
Results 46
Discussion 50
Question 3: Purposes for Reading 54
Categories of Responses 54
Results 56
Discussion 60

Question 4: Where Reading Material Acquired.... 64
Categories of Responses..... 64
Results..... 65
Discussion..... 69
Question 5: Most Important Reading..... 73
Results..... 76
Discussion..... 77
Question 6: Still to be Learned..... 79
Categories of Responses..... 79
Results..... 81
Discussion..... 82
The Review Using Prompt Cards..... 84
Results..... 84
Discussion..... 85
5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS..... 87
Overview of the Study..... 87
Conclusions..... 88
Beginner/Veteran Comparison..... 90
Recommendations for Further Research..... 93
Implications..... 94
Concluding Statement..... 95

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 96

APPENDIX A..... 102
The Instrument..... 103
Letter to Instructors..... 104
Invitation to Participate..... 105

APPENDIX B..... 106
The Prompt Cards..... 107

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Demographics - Beginners.....	29
1.2	Demographics - Veterans.....	30
2.1	What People Read - At Home.....	38
2.2	What People Read - At Other Places.....	38
3.1	Mean Number of Minutes Per Day Spent Reading - At Home.....	47
3.2	Mean Number of Minutes Per Day Spent Reading - At Other Places.....	48
4.1	Purposes for Reading - At Home.....	57
4.2	Purposes for Reading - At Other Places.....	58
5.1	Sources of Reading Materials - At Home.....	66
5.2	Sources of Reading Materials - At Other Places..	67
6.1	Most Important Reading - At Home.....	74
6.2	Most Important Reading - At Other Places.....	75
7.1	Reading Still to be Learned - At Home.....	80
7.2	Reading Still to be Learned - At Other Places...	80
8.1	Beginners/Veterans Comparison - At Home.....	91
8.2	Beginners/Veterans Comparison - At Other Places.	92

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People spend changing amounts of time reading a shifting variety of materials for different purposes during the various stages of their lives. Gender, socio-economic status, education, occupation, and age are all factors in why, what and for how long people read.

Reading is a basic life skill, fundamental to learning and living in developed nations and sought after by Third World countries as a means to advance and improve life chances economically, socially, and individually. It is a key to universal basic education (World Conference on Education for All, Thailand, March 1990).

It is maintained that everyone has a right to learn (Ryan, 1985). "Literacy is an educational tool of crucial importance to life" (p. 375) in a literate society, and post-literacy activity makes literacy meaningful and motivating to the learner and "provides the enhancement of the utility and rewards of reading and writing" (p. 377).

Recent surveys (Cairns, 1988; DeCoita, 1984; Southam, 1987; Thomas, 1983) have raised concerns about literacy in Canada. It is suggested that between four and five million persons in Canada are either totally or functionally illiterate in that they cannot effectively deal with the reading, writing, and numeracy requirements of everyday life in the home, the workplace, and elsewhere (Southam, 1987).

In the post-World War II years, Canada joined the world in promoting educational improvement generally. Since the early seventies, adult education has had an increasing focus in Canada until, in the eighties, Alberta became seriously involved.

However, economic downturns have recently intervened, creating pressures for economic restraint, international re-alignments, and for redefining developmental priorities. Educational expenditures have fallen (Decore & Pannu, 1988) nationwide, and priorities have shifted. Though enrolments in adult education continue to increase, funding has levelled off and access to funding has been restricted.

There is now a trend toward educating the best and forgeting the rest. The federal government has withdrawn its support for adult basic education while increasing its commitment at post-secondary levels (ibid). Adult Vocational Training Allowances for basic education candidates are minimal and often difficult to acquire. People who wish to improve themselves academically are less likely to gain admittance to adult basic education programs than are people who say they want to get a job (Faulk, 1987).

Adult basic education (ABE) programs in Alberta are vocationally oriented, with incoming students being required to state a vocational goal. Yet, reading is broadly applicable and, regardless of what reason is given for the purpose of enroling, ABE students nevertheless develop some reading habits.

The effects of participation in adult basic education upon individuals in terms of reading habits have not been addressed. Human rights, access to information, and self-determination are currently important social issues in Canada and throughout the world. Participation in adult basic education should result in graduates accessing more print materials and being more successful users of the print resources available to all.

What do newly literate adults actually read? Do adults who participate in basic education programs change their reading habits and, if so, what kind of changes occur and endure?

Every year for the past twenty-five years, hundreds of men and women have enroled in adult literacy or basic education programs at centres in Alberta. Evaluation has been carried on within the centres for purposes of advancement and for recommendations to other programs. Some efforts have been made to determine if graduates acquire jobs as a result of their training. Research is done internally to evaluate program effectiveness, enrolment, and so on for purposes of planning, reporting, and funding, but not to assess changes in reading habits.

There is little in the literature which measures retention and use of literacy skills among adults (Kavanaugh, 1988) though some related studies have been done in grade-school settings (Foster, 1985; Shore, 1986). It is significant, however, that although adults have sought literacy training more for personal than for vocational reasons (Beder & Valentine, 1990; Calamai, 1987; DeCoita, 1984; Kozol, 1985;) they have often attended occupationally-oriented programs because these were the most available. To enrol at one centre, a person had to state a vocational purpose which was acceptable to, and considered realistic by, the gatekeepers (counsellors), regardless of one's personal goals, in order to qualify to register (Faulk, 1987). Whether such persons achieved their real goals has yet to be ascertained.

A failing of UNESCO's Experimental World Literacy Program was the lack of follow-up materials and activities (Bhola, 1988). In Canada, access to reading materials is, and has been, almost universal and it is

easy for the persons motivated to use them. One would expect veterans to take advantage of this easy access to translate their newly-gained reading skills into new habits._

The Problem

It is not known how the reading habits of long-term participants in an adult basic education program at a Centre in Alberta differ from the reading habits of students who are newly enroled.

The research questions were as follows:

1. How does the variety of reading materials used by basic education veterans compare to the variety used by those newly enroled?
2. How does the amount of time spent reading by basic education veterans compare with the amount reported by the newly enroled?
3. How do the purposes for reading reported by basic education veterans compare with the purposes reported by the newly enroled?
4. How do the sources of reading materials of basic education veterans compare to the sources of those newly enroled?
5. What kind of reading is considered to be most important by veterans contrasted to that considered most important by the newly enroled?
6. What kind of reading is considered 'the most important to yet be learned' by veterans contrasted to that considered 'most important to be learned' by the newly enroled?

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to students attending a single ABE Centre in a large urban setting.
2. The study was delimited to the reading of English materials.

3. The study did not attempt to evaluate the basic education program at the Centre.

Definitions

1. **Adult Basic Education** - education intended to meet basic learning needs: education in literacy, general knowledge and life skills; it extends to Level 12 at the Centre.
2. **Level** - placement for instruction as determined by the staff at the Centre.
3. **Long-term** - attendance at the Centre for 18 or more weeks of instruction.
4. **Reading habits** - refers to interaction with printed materials in English in terms of time spent reading, the variety of materials read, the purposes for reading and the sources from which reading materials are acquired.
5. **Reading matter** - books, periodicals, texts, manuals, guides, signs, maps, scriptures, letters, notes, memos, forms, indexes, schedules, and so on that involve printed or written words, numerals, or symbols whether on paper, other surfaces, or in electronic display.
6. **Veterans** - students who have become long-term participants at the Centre.
7. **Beginners** - students newly enroled in Adult Basic Education.
8. **Centre** - the institution where the interviews were conducted.

Need for the Study

A literate populace is believed to be a benefit to a nation. Understandings and skills beyond those of use in the workplace are necessary for full participation in a democratic society. Yet, there is a trend toward functional literacy training by governments and businesses with curricula carefully defined and limited.

All literacy training, even that which is for vocational purposes, should instill desire and ability to read for life improvements as well as for job skills. The centre involved in this study was funded to prepare people for vocational purposes and evaluated on that basis. There have been no studies to ascertain reading habits amongst long term participants in adult basic education at the Centre.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This chapter contains a review of the literature related to the reading habits being considered within this study. As much as possible, pertinent studies will be related to each of the questions in the Instrument (see Appendix A). The divisions within this chapter will thus include a review of studies related to What People Read, How Much Time People Read, Purposes for Reading, and Where People Get the Materials They Read. The last two divisions will deal with the Type of Reading Which is Considered Most Important to People and What Reading People Want to Learn How to Do.

What People Read

Research reports indicate the most common reading choices to be books, newspapers, and magazines (LeGrand-Brodsky, 1979; Nell, 1988; Rachal & Leonard, 1991; Rice, 1986; Sharon, 1974). This is true of children (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980; Rice, 1986) and older adults (Forlizzi, 1990; Ribovich & Erikson, 1980; Rice, 1986) as well as amongst males and females generally (Legrand-Brodsky, 1979; Moffitt, 1992; Nell, 1988; Sharon, 1974), though the order of those items in terms of purpose and time allocations vary by age, gender, educational level, and occupation.

During elementary grades, students spend 62% of their reading time on books (Greaney, 1980) and about 31% of their reading time on comics. According to Sharon (1974), 33% of adults read books, 73% read newspapers and 40% read magazines. Both Nell (1988) and Rice (1986) reported that book reading occupied more time per day than magazines and

newspapers combined. Older adults read less work-related material and more current events than did people who were still part of the work force. Ribovich and Erikson (1980) indicated that 80% of older adults read books and 97% read newspapers.

Rice (1986) and Ribovich and Erikson (1980) both found the choice of newspapers or magazines to vary with age. According to Rice, 28% of reading by youth was either newspapers or magazines; for middle-aged people these items comprised 47% of the reading; and for older adults they comprised 56%.

Forlizzi (1990) found that amongst older adults the most popular reading choices were the Bible, newpapers and magazines, all of which were read for pleasure and/or information. Ribovich and Erikson (1980) found that 80% of their sample read books while 97% reported reading magazines, again for pleasure and/or information.

Females read more books than do males (Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980; Legrand-Brodsky, 1979; Moffitt, 1992; Nell, 1988). Greaney (1980), in studying 920 Grade 5 students found girls selecting books to read while boys selected comics.

Moffitt (1992) found more females reading for leisure than males which is consistent with Walter's (1927) findings. Guthrie et al. (1986) found that females devoted more time daily to reading Society/Science items, Fiction/Viewpoint items, News/Business items, References and Briefs with males spending more time only on Recreation/Sports items.

Sharon (1974) found males spending more time reading than females in the early Seventies, because work-related reading was included and at

that time more males were employed than females. He reported 33% of the sample reading at work, 33% reading books while magazines were read by 39% of the sample and newspapers by 73%.

Most sources reported variations in reading selection and time spent based upon differences in educational level and/or occupation (Guthrie et al., 1986; Mikulecky, 1981; Ribovich and Erikson, 1980; Rice, 1986; Sharon, 1974). These researchers generally agreed that the higher the level of education the more time was spent reading in a greater variety of contexts. Most found also that technical occupations required more on-the-job reading than did low-skill and blue-collar occupations.

However, Smith (1990) drew different inferences, reporting that education level and occupation had no effect on the variation in reading interests. He also reported less reading activity than did the other sources. After tracking 89 people from 1962 to 1988, he found that 36% of the sample spent less than 60 MPD reading, with even the most active professionals recording only 145 minutes per day.

Mikulecky (1981) reported more reading by workers than by technical college or high school students. Guthrie et al. (1986) also reported more reading for work purposes than for leisure by both the groups they interviewed, those with less than high school completion and those with more than high school completion. Similar findings were reported for both males and females.

Sharon (1974), Mikulecky (1981) and Guthrie et al. (1986) added work-related reading to the categories of Books, Newspapers and Magazines. In the Seventies, the average American spent less than two

hours per day reading in one or more of these four categories (Sharon, 1974) with a range from less than an hour a day for those who had not gone beyond high school to over three hours a day for people who had done some graduate work. Mikulecky (1981) found high school students devoting an hour and a half per day to reading, which included schoolwork, and workers averaging over three and a half hours per day reading on the job. Guthrie et al. (1986) reported an hour and a half to almost four and a half hours per day amongst people ranging from high school completion to professional in training.

Different researchers reported different amounts of time spent on different kinds of reading materials at work and at home. Perhaps Guthrie (1986) summarized it best by formulating three generalizations:

1. "Education increased the reading of some contexts but not others"
2. "Education increased the volume of reading certain contexts at work, but different contexts at home"
3. "Occupational contexts, then, influenced the volumes of some, but not all contents of reading" (p. 159).

For example, at work, higher education levels tended to be associated more with reading Society/Science and Reference contexts. At home, higher education is related to more reading of Fiction/Viewpoint and News/Business.

Saying that books, magazines and newpapers are the most commonly selected items certainly does not exhaust the list. Rice (1986) surveyed people who accessed up to 21 different reading sources over five weeks. Over 70% of Rachal and Leonard's (1991) respondents

accessed materials other than the big three. Over half of Sharon's (1974) sample read mail. Signs, notices, and advertising along with pamphlets, brochures, and fliers saturate democratic communities, especially urban communities, and are read to some degree by almost everyone. Labels, cards, bills and price tags are present and are read almost everywhere within American cultures. Such things make up much of what functional literacy involves and, until recently, the reading of such items had not been surveyed. Such functional reading events were seldom reported in earlier studies.

The choice of what to read and when may relate to the amount of time and attention the reader can devote. A few brief minutes of free time between high tension activities may be a time when a reader chooses something light to read. A free hour may generate the desire to read a short story or several chapters of a novel. A free evening may be dedicated to complete immersion with a favorite author, a project, or a long term goal.

How Much Time People Read

The amount of time spent reading varies with age, gender, content, setting, changing daily requirements, education and socio-economic status. As content has been dealt with above, this section will focus on the other variables.

Age

Young readers have been the focus of several studies. Readers at a Grade Five level spent 15 to 18 MPD reading during out of school time and about 80 MPD overall (Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980). Adolescents reported reading as their fourth most favorite leisure

activity (Moffitt, 1992) with 70% of females and 57% of males reading out of school from 35 to 300 minutes per day. The high schoolers Mikulecky (1981) studied spent 98 MPD reading, including schoolwork. In 1986, Rice compared different age groups and found young readers (ages 18 to 32) devoting from 6 to 10.5 hours per week to reading for pleasure, and 12.6 to 14.2 hours per week to reading generally.

In his 1974 report about what 5,067 adults read, Sharon concluded that the average adult in the early Seventies read for some 106 minutes per day. Seventy-one percent read for more than one hour per day and 45% read for two or more hours per day. In 1986, Guthrie determined that adults read for 207 MPD, 127 minutes at work and a further 80 minutes for leisure.

Older adults have been studied by several researchers. Smith (1990) reported that 68% of the older adults surveyed read between one and five hours per day. In 1986, Rice's mean reading times for older adults varied from 10 to 15 hours per week, depending on age category. The older respondents in Sharon's (1974) research read less than younger adults but more than children and youth. These findings varied from what Rice reported. In her study the older adults with high ability read longer per week than every other group except high ability middle-aged adults. Check and Toellner (1984), who differentiated between older adults living independently and those who were in nursing homes, found the independents reading more than 2 hours per day while the dependent oldsters generally read for less than 1 hour per day.

Gender

The majority of researchers agree that females read for longer per day than do males (Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980; Guthrie et al., 1986; LeGrand-Brodsky, 1979; Moffitt, 1992; Nell, 1988). Only Sharon, in 1974, found males outreading females by 113 to 101 MPD, a difference accounted for by more males reading on the job at that time. More recently this workplace bias has changed, and Guthrie et al. (1986) reported females outreading males in the workplace 97 to 68 MPD and overall by 221 to 161 minutes per day. In all but one context, females put in more time than males who excelled only in time spent reading in the Recreation/Sports category. Females certainly appeared to dominate in the Eighties, and this was supported by the Southam (1987) study which found Canadian females to be more literate than males.

Setting and Changing Daily Requirements

The amount of time spent reading varied from work to home, from weekday to weekend, and from daytime to evening. People who read on the job spent about one hour more per day reading at work than they did at home according to Guthrie et al. (1986) and Mikulecky (1981). In contrast, a study by Sharon (1974) revealed considerably less work-related reading than home reading on average. Sharon further reported that adults read more on weekdays than on weekend days. Rachal and Leonard (1991), in looking at ABE and GED students, found work-related reading to be the least of all categories investigated. Forty-six percent of Moffitt's (1992) respondents, males and females, preferred reading at home in the evenings.

Rice (1986) drew the conclusion that time spent reading varied with changing daily requirements. This is consistent with the differences noted between work days and non-work days by Sharon (1974) and differences within the day noted by Moffitt (1992). People fit leisure reading into many time slots. During travel, at coffee or meal breaks, in down times while at work and in school, between classes or appointments, over meals, while working around the house, and during stationary exercise (Moffitt, 1992). As people pass through life's stages, their daily-life requirements vary. The times and places in which to read are changed to accomodate these daily life constraints.

Education

Time devoted to reading increases with educational achievement (Greaney, 1980; Guthrie et al., 1986; Moffitt, 1992; Nell, 1988; Ribovich and Erikson, 1980; Sharon, 1974; Smith, 1990). Guthrie et al. conditioned their findings by saying that educational level increased reading of some contexts. Smith agreed that amount of time increased with education but stated that variety did not.

Socio-economic Status

Moffitt's (1992) studies clearly indicated that amongst high school students, those in high or low socio-economic classes tended to read more than did students in the middle. Sharon (1974) reported white-collar workers reading more than blue-collar. Ribovich and Erikson (1980) found professional people reading more and liking it better than did non-professionals throughout their lifetimes. Contrary to these general findings, Guthrie et al. (1986) identified clerical workers at a Fortune 500 company to be the most prolific readers,

exceeding managerial and professional people in general by 65 MPD at work and by 15 MPD in leisure reading.

Why People Read

For Pleasure

Reading for pleasure (also referred to as reading for entertainment, for relaxation, for leisure, for recreation, or to pass time) is a common purpose reported in most studies. Anderson et al. (1988) found Grade 5 students devoting over 5% of their available time to reading for leisure. Moffitt (1992) reported reading to be the fourth most popular pastime amongst high school students with 78% of his sample reading books for leisure. Rice (1986) found reading to relax as a purpose across age groups in consistent proportions.

LeGrand-Brodsky (1979) differentiated between book readers who read for pleasure and non-book readers who read to gain knowledge. Check and Toellner (1984), Ribovich and Erikson (1980), and Forlizzi (1990) found reading for pleasure and/or enjoyment a common purpose amongst adults from 60 to over 90 years of age. It is informative to learn from Rachal and Leonard (1991) that their ABE and GED students read for recreation less often than for other purposes.

Nell (1988) drew attention to reading being used to dull or heighten consciousness. Folk wisdom would call such reading escapism or thrill seeking, the first to fill in empty hours whenever negative feelings or memories might cause pain or uneasiness, the second to escape reality to a more exciting or more controllable dimension. Nell would argue that leisure reading fills needs and provides

gratifications. "Pleasure reading is a form of play. It is free activity standing outside ordinary life" (p. 7).

Guthrie (1979), reporting the findings of the Book Industry Study Group, stated that "[t]he two most frequent reasons people give for reading have stayed the same between 1942 and 1978" (p. 754), for pleasure and for information. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) asked ABE students if adult education classes had helped them become better readers and, if so, how had they applied their improved reading skills. "[A] majority of respondents applied their improved reading skills to newpapers, magazines, and books - media that provide information and entertainment" (p. 19).

For Knowledge/Understanding

Whereas people of all ages were reported to read for pleasure, reading for knowledge and understanding, the second most consistent purpose reported in the literature, increased with age. Keeping current is very important to people over 60 years of age. Check and Toellner (1984) and Forlizzi (1990) placed reading for knowledge second after reading for enjoyment. Rice (1986) and Ribovich and Erikson (1980) put it first. Newspaper reading, especially, and magazine reading appeared to increase with the age of the reader in all settings. ABE and GED students chose educational reading, which included news, first overall according to Rachal and Leonard. (1991).

For Functional Purposes

Southam News, in its 1987 survey, assumed the need for all Canadians to be competent in ten areas fundamental to daily living in order to be considered literate. A lot of functional literacy tasks

involve risk taking, what Hayes and Valentine (1989) would call "the consequences of task failure" (p. 11). Filling out applications for jobs, orders for merchandise, registration forms, leases, and tax returns involve far more risk than does reading for pleasure. Forlizzi (1990) mentioned eleven items his respondents felt they must read in their daily lives and for which they often got help. Developing support systems and coping strategies is common among people generally in areas where literacy tasks involve greater risks. When such tasks are taken care of by alternatives to reading, the person may no longer perceive them as reading needs. Few people, if any, actually seek out opportunities to practice functional literacy tasks, in terms of volume and time spent, with the same energy as they do reading for pleasure. Many functional tasks occur so infrequently that even people who had previously mastered a task may feel a bit doubtful or hesitant, due to lack of practice, when it becomes necessary again.

Southam's news reports motivated some people to seek out literacy training, and in the late Eighties a resurgence of registrations in adult literacy training programs occured. Two types of result soon became apparent. Diekhoff (1988) concluded that "the average participant gains only 1 or 2 reading grade levels and is still functionally illiterate by almost any standard when he or she leaves training" (p. 629). Either the training programs were inadequate or the tasks were not motivating and students may not have felt their needs were met, resulting in "[h]igh rates of absenteeism and dropout plagu[ing] ABE programs everywhere" (Balmuth, 1987; p. 621).

When gains were reported by ABE students, as in a study by Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) where 82.8% of the 400 respondents answered yes to the question "Has the adult education class helped you become a better reader?" (p. 19), "for most participants the important outcomes or benefits of basic skills education ha[d] little to do with employment" (p. 22).

Where People Get Reading Materials

Greaney (1980) found Grade Five boys differed from the girls by tending not to have library cards or to use the libraries. Rachal and Leonard (1991) saw more frequent readers making greater use of libraries, owning more books and subscribing to magazines and newspapers more often. Borrowing from friends and family members was common among readers according to Rachal and Leonard (1991) and Ribovich and Erikson (1980).

The more frequent readers in Rachal and Leonard's (1991) study owned more books, used library and school material more often, and subscribed to more periodicals than did the others. Of their 217 ABE and GED students, 46% bought reading matter, 29% received it in the mail, 24% used things from public or school libraries, 23% borrowed from friends, and 15% used Church materials.

Readers buy books and other materials (LeGrand-Brodsky, 1979; Rachal and Leonard, 1991). Rachal and Leonard found 46% of their respondents bought new reading materials, a number greater than those who reported borrowing from friends or checking materials out of the library. Some 29% received materials in the mail, perhaps by

subscription, suggesting that more than 46% of their respondents bought reading materials.

A chicken-egg question is obvious. Do good readers access more sources of materials because they are good readers, or do people who are willing to access more sources become better readers? No doubt, some of both!

If, indeed, practice makes perfect, then a necessary complement to reading instruction must be reading practice. Guthrie et al. (1986) stated: "Reading achievement has been positively correlated with time spent reading in elementary classrooms (Berliner, 1981), leisure reading time (Greaney, 1980) and time spent reading the newspaper (Tan & Gunter, 1979)" (p. 151). People who can access useful, interesting, and/or rewarding sources of materials are likely to engage in more, and often broader, practice than do those who read only to complete an assignment or a task at hand. The difference for some readers is certainly a lack of access to a variety of sources. For others, it may be only the lack of encouragement to practice or the lack of an introduction to good sources of material.

A positive practice/achievement relationship between readers and sources would help explain why higher socio-economic status relates to better reading ability. Wealth provides access to more reading materials. Social contacts provide encouragement and introductions as well as more people with whom to trade or borrow reading materials. Mobility broadens the number of sources. These three (wealth, social contacts, and mobility) are often the privilege of those with higher

socio-economic status and may be found to translate into more practice and better reading skills.

On the other hand, access to sources does not explain why females read more/better than males as both have equal access when random samples of large populations are considered. Motivational factors may inform this difference.

The Type of Reading Considered Most Important

Is one kind of reading more important than another? How would one differentiate and judge? If one used time spent, then leisure reading would be selected. Using preferred reading matter as a standard of judgement would lead to choosing newspaper reading as most important. Logically, materials which contain information vital to continuing good health and life should be considered most important. Answering the question really requires that a judgement be made by each respondent. Responses could be as varied as are the people surveyed.

Forlizzi (1990) reported eleven items people felt they must read in their daily lives, things such as prescriptions, labels, directions, street signs, and forms. Southam (1987) identified 38 functional reading tasks which a Canadian of average ability was presumed to be able to complete, of which 10 items were selected as skills essential for coping with normal contemporary living (Calamai, 1987). Nell's (1988) "data indicate that, for all subject groups, merit and preference rankings are inversely related" (p. 31). People reported what they liked to read instead of reporting which type of reading was most important to them.

Sharon (1974) found "[t]he importance of many types of reading is frequently overlooked because of the relatively short time spent on them" (p. 169). Kinds of reading considered most important in Sharon's study were classified according to contexts. Traffic and street signs were the most important items to be read while people were travelling. Size, weight and price reading were most important while shopping. Manuals and guides were selected at work. Extending this notion, programs and score cards may be selected while at the theatre or arena, cheques, bank statements and bills might rank first around the home. Importance is thus connected to contexts.

Sharon further reported that there was status associated with reading habits in every setting. Higher status reading was not necessarily associated with importance. For example, reading the scriptures was generally considered the most important type of book reading, but thought to be of the lowest status. The General Interest/News type of magazine was ranked most important but the Literary/Political Review types had the highest status. Among non-readers, there was generally a desire to learn to read specific items, most often items of a religious nature. Other important items named were newspapers, magazines, books, and mail (Sharon, 1974).

Generally, non-fiction books such as scriptures, manuals, guides, biographies, texts, and references were deemed most important but were not the most popular choices. Amongst females, romance novels were inordinately more popular than all other choices. Amongst males, fantasy, science fiction, and sports were equally popular (Moffitt, 1992).

Hayes and Valentine (1989), in a study of ABE students, identified 20 functional literacy tasks considered important to the 160 respondents. Beder and Valentine (1990) isolated two important factors, Literacy Development and Educational Advancement, which influenced students to enrol in ABE colleges. Obviously, the importance of a reading habit related to place and circumstance, not to an absolute scale.

What Reading People Want to Learn to Do

It is difficult for people to identify a need for something they do not have and never have had. Sales strategists have always emphasized to their trainees that finding, even creating, the need was the key to a sale. Americans did not need automobiles at the time the horse was the major source of transportation. Most of them were unable to foresee the need which would develop in the future as the automobile became a way of life. Some students dropped out of school because they could not see any purpose in continuing. Later, as ABE students, they re-enroled, because their experience had shown them what they needed. Few, if any, enroled to gain a specific reading skill, and the gatekeepers at the colleges would certainly have found it unusual for a student to enrol to gain skill in drawing inferences or to learn to find meaning from context. Rather, they enroled to get a better job, or to help their children do homework, or to learn to read to avoid being exploited by the small print. They expected the college personnel to identify particular skills which they were lacking and help them to gain those skills. Asking people to identify their most needed reading ability presents a difficult task for them. They have to key on

material and purpose within a context. "It is the interaction between use and material that operationally defines a reading task and determines the processing demands likely to be required for adequate performance (Kirsch & Guthrie, 1984; p. 231).

Hayes and Valentine (1989) used a selected group of ABE students to rank the desired competencies named in the Adult Performance Level Project (APL) of 1975 and to add other competencies not found in the APL. A list of 20 functional literacy tasks was thereby developed. This list was presented to 160 low-literate adults from urban settings who were asked to indicate how important each competency was to them on a 4-point scale. The mean score for each task was calculated and used to rank the tasks according to their importance. The ten highest ranked items are listed in order below:

> Filling out an income tax form
> Reading and using road maps and city maps
> Reading and using a thermometer
> Using a checking account at a bank
> Budgeting your money
> Helping children with schoolwork
> Reading the Bible
> Reading and using a voting ballot
> Filling out job application forms
> Reading medicine labels (p. 7)

This list is informative, surprising, and suggestive. When Hayes and Valentine (1989) followed up their study by asking the students to indicate what they had actually learned while enrolled as ABE students, they discovered a "tendency for the students to learn most what they needed least and to learn least what they needed most" (p. 11).

Two other factors beside task difficulty will affect perception of reading needs. One is the "frequency with which a task is encountered" (p. 11). Tasks which occur often need to be dealt with. Low-literate

persons may develop support systems to deal with such tasks. Having dealt with the tasks they no longer feel a need to learn that skill for themselves, and will not report it as a need at all.

Second is the risk factor. If failing at a task would result in some reaction from law or from authority figures, that task will be deemed more important or more necessary and reported as such because of the risk factor.

To identify a need, the person must be aware of the need as well as of the skill deficiency. Often it requires a person or an occurence to identify the need for the learner.

Summary

The literature suggests that generally people read for about two hours per day, with a range from under one to over eight hours. They report reading books, magazines, and newspapers which are either bought or borrowed both at home and in the workplace mainly for pleasure and for information. Reading has been found to increase with education, socio-economic status and with some types of jobs as well as with gender.

However, it is important to note the inconsistencies between studies of reading habits, especially concerning reading times. All of the studies cited relied largely on self reported information which, for various reasons, as indicated by Mikulecky (1980), is often over or under-reported. This study relied on self reported information also.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to ascertain differences in reading habits between Beginners and Veterans who participated in an Adult Basic Education program.

In order to achieve this purpose, data were collected about reading habits in response to open-ended questions during a one-on-one interview with adult basic education (ABE) students at intermediate levels of instruction at an adult education center. This chapter will present information concerning the procedures used under four headings: Sampling, The Instrument, Collecting the Data, and Analysis of the Data.

Sampling

Criteria for Sample Selection

All native speakers of English newly enroled in the Adult Basic Education Program in Levels 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, except those who may have had serious auditory or visual problems formed the population from which the sample was selected. Data for Veteran students were obtained from people at Levels 5 to 9 also, in an attempt to control for differences in reading ability levels. It would have been preferable to collect data from persons at the same skill levels but the population was too limited to allow that. Any student who had attended for 18 or more weeks of instruction was considered to be a Veteran.

The population of English-speaking ABE students at the adult education centre was quite limited. There were between 20 and 30 students per classroom in Levels 5 through 9, and most of the classes were comprised of people at two levels, 5 and 6 together for example.

The classes included predominantly English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students. It turned out to be impossible to acquire 20 ABE beginners and another 20 ABE veterans. The ABE students at the Centre were mostly female, and the two groups used in this study were balanced for gender.

People selected for this study had to have received their literacy training in English. Those who first became literate in a foreign language were disqualified, along with the ESL students. Therefore the sample included some multi-lingual students whose schooling had been in English, though they may have spoken a second language at home.

Identifying the Sample

It was acknowledged very early in the planning that a convenience sample would have to be sought. The number of ABE students at the adult education centre had been lower every year as more and more ESL students competed for limited placements.

Sampling and interviewing had to be done after the second week of each twenty-week intake because of testing and orientation requirements, and had to be completed before week sixteen when final examination pressures mounted. Wednesdays were early dismissal days for all students and proved less useful for interviews. Mondays and Fridays had the highest absenteeism in each week, so Tuesdays and Thursdays became the preferred interview days. Christmas and Easter breaks forced many interview cancellations and/or reschedulings during the weeks prior to and following each break.

The first attempt to enlist volunteers began December 11, 1990 with a letter to all Level 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 instructors, seeking their assistance in identifying the ABE students in each class (Appendix A).

The instructors were asked to give each ABE student an Invitation to Participate/Volunteer form (Appendix A) to be completed by the student and returned to the instructor who would pass it along to the interviewer. This resulted in eleven candidates, ten of whom were interviewed between January 8 and 18, 1991. Sixteen appointments were necessary to complete these 10 interviews.

A second canvassing was done in February, 1991 following a new intake. The interviewer visited each class to explain the request, passed out the Invitation to Participate forms, and collected them immediately wherever possible. Eight volunteers were identified and seven were interviewed between February 19 and March 1, 1991 though 14 appointments were scheduled.

These seven exhausted the possibilities for that intake, so after Easter when a new 20-week course began, a third sampling was undertaken. The final seven interviews resulted from scheduling 15 meetings with thirteen volunteers between May 13 and 18, 1991. The rest were no shows. In all, 45 meetings were scheduled with 33 candidates, and 24 people were interviewed. Eight weeks of afternoons and evenings were required to obtain the interviews. By mid-May of 1991, both the rules and the personnel at the Centre were changing and no more sampling could be done. Two of the people interviewed were rejected, one having been a high school graduate in a foreign language; the second being from a Level 2/3 class which was outside the sampling parameters.

Nature of the Sample

Students who attended the adult education centre had to be over 18 years of age, out of school for a year or longer, and had to provide a

non-academic reason for wanting to enrol. Often they had been on a waiting list for as long as one year or more.

When admitted, they were placed at a level of instruction roughly equivalent to Grades 1 through 12, according to their results on the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE). They either supported themselves, acquired student loans, or received Social Assistance of $10.00 per day of attendance.

Each intake was for 20 weeks. Advancement depended upon further testing and a subsequent application to enrol. Continuing students had precedence over those on the waiting list for their second intake but after that they may have had to go back on a waiting list. The result was that, assuming an average gain of one level in 20 weeks, most students would have had to enrol two or more times to achieve Grade 12 completion.

Of the 22 people selected, 18 were female and four male (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Their ages ranged from 19 to 51 (m = 30.5). The amount of prior schooling ranged from Grades 6 to 12 with a mean of 9.4. They were enroled in Levels 5 to 9 at the centre (m = 7.25) and had attended ABE classes there for from two to 42 weeks (m = 15.6)

Eight of the volunteers were married, though 12 had dependents. Ten claimed to be single with two divorced, one separated, and one widowed.

Fourteen had employment with seven of these 14 supporting dependents. Eleven of the group were aged from 19 to 26 years and the other 11 were between 27 and 51 years old.

Table 1.1

Demographics - Beginners

GEN	MAR	AGE	DEP	WOR	HIG	LEV	WKS
F	Sin	19	0	yes	9	4/5	2
F	Mar	21	2	yes	10	6/7	6
F	Mar	21	1	no	10	6/7	2
M	Mar	23	0	yes	6	7	4
F	Sin	24	0	yes	12	6	2
F	Mar	25	0	yes	10	9	8
M	Sin	25	0	yes	8	6/7	2
F	Sin	29	1	yes	10	8	8
F	Mar	34	2	yes	7	6/7	2
F	Div	43	0	no	9	9	8
F	Mar	46	0	no	9	3	2
Means		28.2	0.6		9.2	6.6	4.2

Note. GEN = Gender; MAR = Marital Status; DEP = Dependents; WOR = Working; HIG = Highest Grade Completed; LEV = Level of Placement at Centre; WKS = Weeks attended at Centre; F = Female; M = Male; Sin = Single; Mar = Married; Div = Divorced.

Table 1.2

Demographics - Veterans

GEN	MAR	AGE	DEP	WOR	HIG	LEV	WKS
M	Sin	19	0	no	10	9	20
F	Sin	19	0	yes	10	6/7	23
F	Sin	20	1	no	10	9	29
F	Sin	23	1	yes	10	7/8	18
F	Sin	27	3	no	8	4/5	32
F	Sin	27	3	no	8	9	20
M	Mar	34	3	no	10	6/7	32
M	Mar	42	4	yes	12	6/7	42
F	Div	48	0	yes	12	9	18
F	Sep	50	1	yes	10	9	20
F	Wid	51	1	yes	6	6	42
Means		32.7	1.6		9.6	7.5	27

Note. GEN = Gender; MAR = Marital Status; DEP = Dependents; WOR = Working; HIG = Highest Grade Completed; LEV = Level of Placement at Centre; WKS = Weeks attended at Centre; F = Female; M = Male; Sin = Single; Mar = Married; Div = Divorced; Sep = Separated; Wid = Widow.

The 11 Beginners had been enroled at the Centre from two to eight weeks (m = 4.2). Nine were female and two male. Four were single, six married, and one divorced. Four had dependents and eight were working.

The Beginners' schooling ranged from Grades 6 to 12 (m = 9.2) and they were enroled between Levels 3 and 9 (m = 6.6). Six were at Level 6/7, three at Level 8/9 and two below Level 6. The ages for Beginners were 19 to 46 (m = 28.2), with eight under 30 and three over 30.

The Veterans had been attending ABE classes for from 18 to 42 weeks (m = 27). Nine were female and two male, with six of them single, two married and one each separated, divorced or widowed. Eight of the Veterans had dependents and six were working.

The Veterans' school achievement ranged from Grades 6 to 12 (m = 7.5) and they were enroled at Levels 4 through 9. Five were at Level 9 and five at Level 6/7. Only one was below Level 6. The Veterans' ages ranged from 19 to 51 (m = 32.7) with six under 30 and five over 30, making them somewhat older than the Beginners.

Veterans had more dependents than did the Beginners, a ratio of almost two to one, and more Veterans than Beginners had dependents. More Veterans than Beginners had attended high school with eight of them reporting the highest grade achieved as 10, 11, or 12, while only five beginners went beyond Grade 9.

Given that the Veterans had enroled for a second time in most cases, it may be assumed that they had advanced from a lower to a higher level in qualifying to re-enrol. By deducting one instructional level from the Veterans' mean of 7.5, we might place them at a mean of 6.5 for

the previous intake period, precisely where the Beginners' mean was at the time of the study.

It can be argued therefore that the two groups were comparable in most categories. They differed somewhat in the number of dependents, in the highest grade achieved, and in age and instructional level. The Beginners were somewhat younger than the Veterans (28.2 to 32.7 years), were enroled at a lower level (6.6 to 7.5) and more likely to be married (6 to 2). Only four Beginners had dependents. It is important to acknowledge, however, that because of high dropout rates in ABE programs, the Veterans group may represent a select sample.

The Instrument

Rationale for the Instrument

No instrument to measure reading habits, as defined in this study, was found, or referred to, in the literature. The type of information being sought was not fully predictable, so open-ended questions were considered to be more appropriate than a more structured instrument.

A closed-question type of instrument with multiple choice questions or Likert Scale statements would have been too limiting, restricting the responses to the researcher's suggested choices. Using general categories was considered to be risky in that too much useful information would be lost. To accommodate the various ability levels of the respondents, an open-ended questionnaire was felt to be more flexible as the interviewer could adapt the style of questioning to avoid misunderstandings or the appearance of condescension.

It was decided that oral skills would be more consistent across the sample than would reading skills. Open-ended questions requiring

written responses would restrict the capacity of some to fully respond in the event that writing was difficult or impossible for them. Thus questions were designed to be simple and straightforward so that respondents could concentrate on their own experiences. Having the interviewer write and record the responses would allow the respondents to attend more fully to the substance of their answers.

The time required per interview was also a consideration. From the point of view of the respondents, it had to be brief enough to fit into a spare period or lunch break and not be onerous or boring. From the point of view of the interviewer, it had to cover the territory but remain manageable.

A final consideration was participant involvement. To be realistic, the students would have to be able to comfortably relate their own personal experiences and conditions. Such input would require less interpretation by the researcher and vagueness could be clarified on the spot. A more equal relationship would be achieved in a conversational interview. A non-test format would be less threatening with support and encouragement provided.

Description of the Instrument

It was decided, therefore, to use six two-part questions related directly to the six subproblems. Each question would be asked and responded to orally from the perspective of two contexts: the home, and away from home at some other place. The term 'other place' would accommodate varying life styles. The six two-part questions were worded so as not to suggest or restrict possible responses. After completing the six questions, a review of Questions One, Three and Four was to be

conducted using prompt cards (Appendix B). The review of the questions using prompt cards was designed for the purpose of broadening possible responses without introducing bias. The additional data obtained were recorded separately to allow their exclusion if necessary. The demographic questions were asked last. Responses were written down by the interviewer and also recorded on a cassette tape.

Two limitations related to the Instrument need to be noted. Volunteers were expected to interpret the meanings of the terms used in each question (i.e. the term things in the question "What things to you read at home?"). Also, the information provided was self-reported with no independent confirmation of its accuracy. This may have encouraged people to report what they thought was expected of them rather than respond candidly.

Piloting the Instrument

This researcher was reluctant to use any of the available ABE students at the Centre for pilot interviews, so these were conducted in another institution. The interviews went smoothly, with the volunteers having no difficulty responding to the questions. Responses were not sorted in an attempt to pilot the analysis of the data.

Collecting the Data

Once a volunteer was identified, a phone call was made to arrange an interview time. The interviewer's telephone number was made available to each volunteer to facilitate changes or cancellations. A reminder note was written and passed on to each volunteer via an instructor on, or immediately prior to, the agreed day for the interview.

The meeting place was the General Office of the Centre, an area familiar to all students. One of the secretaries was recruited to provide introductions and transmit messages when delays occurred.

A large storage and work room was made available for the interviews and the volunteers were conducted there by the interviewer. The time required to move to the interview room provided an opportunity for friendly conversation and reassurances. The volunteers rarely had as much as one hour of free time so interviews generally involved about 30 minutes.

Renovations at the Centre began in April, 1991 making it necessary to change the interview room. Some of the instructors made their offices available according to their class schedules and the final interviews were conducted in offices adjacent to the General Office.

The interviews were conducted face to face across a table or the corner of a desk. After explaining the purpose to the volunteers, emphasising the confidentiality of their involvement and fielding any questions/concerns they had, the six interview questions were discussed in order with the interviewer taking notes and the tape recorder running.

A review followed using the prompt cards. These responses were recorded separately. Not all interviews included a review because of time limitations. Finally, the demographic data were acquired and the interview ended with an expression of gratitude and appreciation.

No incentive was offered nor expected. Some volunteers expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the study and these requests will be

attended to provided the volunteer can still be located at the time the study is completed.

Analysis of the Data

Because of limited sample size, differences between Veterans and Beginners were not tested statistically. Instead the self-reported data from the interviews were sorted and categorized in order to present them in an organized and revealing manner. This required considerable discussion, revision and judgement. The original plan was to prepare two tables for the responses to each of the subproblems, the tables contrasting the responses by group and by setting, for a total of 12 tables. It was later decided to create tables to compare Veterans and Beginners generally.

Some of the tables (2, 3, 6, and 7) report the number of people who gave a response within a certain category. Hence, a person who reported reading novels, cookbooks, dictionaries and poetry would be reported as a book reader just once, even though s/he gave four book responses to Question 1. Other tables (4 and 5) report the number of responses to the question. In Table 4, for example, a person who reported reading novels, magazines and newspapers for the purpose of entertainment had each of the three For Entertainment responses recorded under three item headings. This was done to minimize the loss of information which occurs when data are collapsed.

For each question there are two tables, one for the At Home responses and the second for the At Other Places responses. They are numbered 2.1 and 2.2 for the Question 1 responses; 3.1 and 3.2 for the Question 2 responses and so on.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is organized in the order of the subproblems. For each question the results will be summarized first by setting, At Home and At Other Places, and then by group, Beginners and Veterans. A discussion section will follow each summary of results focussed on the similarities and differences between Beginners and Veterans groups vis-a-vis that subproblem. Further discussion will relate the results of this study with findings from other studies as well as focus on consistencies and inconsistencies between the results from different subproblems in this study.

Question 1: What People Read

Subjects were asked to tell what things they read at home and at other places. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 present a summary of the number of people who reported reading items within certain categories. The categories were developed after the responses were gathered and are defined prior to presentation of the results.

Categories of Responses

There are eight categories in Table 2.1 and six categories for Table 2.2. The first five categories of each table have common definitions and these are presented prior to the other categories which are included in only one of the two tables.

Table 2.1

What People Read - At Home

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
Books	10	10
Newspapers	11	10
Magazines	6	6
Schoolwork	5	9
Non-book Items	3	3
Children's Items	2	4
Mail	1	1
Electronic Items	1	1

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting at least one item in a category. Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans. [a]n = 11 for each group.

Table 2.2

What People Read - At Other Places

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
Books	4	2
Newspapers	3	0
Magazines	4	5
Schoolwork	3	6
Non-book Items	9	9
Work Items	3	1

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting at least one item in a category. Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans. [a]n = 11 for each group.

1. Books. This category includes novels (fiction and non-fiction), biographies, cookbooks, scriptures, comics and reference books. It excludes books used for the completion of school assignments which were categorized as Schoolwork. An entry here indicates that a person named at least one of the above items categorized as books when asked "What things do you read at home? At other places?".

2. Magazines. Any periodical, including the T.V. Guide, which came by mail or as part of a newspaper yet had a book format, was categorized under the heading Magazine. If the respondent named any magazine such as Readers' Digest, Time, Chatelaine and Life or simply stated "magazines", that person was recorded as a reader of Magazines.

3. Newspapers. Again, the respondent was recorded as a Newspaper reader if s/he reported reading at least one news publication, either purchased or received free, in either tabloid or broadsheet format provided its purpose was to report news. Fliers were for advertisement, not for news. Gossip papers were considered as newspapers.

4. Schoolwork. The reading of any material associated with the doing of school assignments was categorized as Schoolwork if it was reported as such.

5. Non-book items. Many items reported as being read for information and/or direction but which did not fit into the categories of book, magazine, newspapers or mail were grouped here. They included street signs, product labels, billboards, addresses, price tags, license plates, pamphlets, contracts, leases, invoices, application forms, advertisements, recipes, menus, posters, bulletin boards, and cereal boxes.

6. Children's items. Persons reporting the use of any materials for reading to or with children were placed in this category (Table 2.1).

7. Mail. Not everything which came by mail was included in this category. Subscription newspapers and magazines were categorized elsewhere as were advertisements such as fliers. Letters, bills, invoices, promotions and such things which were addressed to the respondent were considered as Mail (Table 2.1).

8. Electronic items. Though not a large category within the study, this is included because of its growing significance. Electronic monitors are becoming more common in the workplace as well as in public places such as libraries. Home television sets now carry written news, program listings, and a variety of other items. They may soon include such things as shopping lists and bank statements. Many cities have businesses and roadways which utilize electronic means for conveying advertisements, warnings and business information to the passing public. Only two people in this study mentioned electronic media in the original interview but many realized during the prompted review that they had overlooked this important category (Table 2.1).

9. Work items. At Other Places, anyone mentioning items read at work for the carrying out of a job, regardless of the nature of the material, was categorized as reporting a work item (Table 2.2).

The addition of the two categories, Non-book Items and Electronic Items, is consistent with prior practice. In the Seventies, Sharon (1974) added work items to the traditional categories of books, magazines, and newspapers used generally in earlier studies of reading habits. In the Eighties, the APL and Southam (1987) studies clearly

made non-book items an important category to be used in future studies. In the Nineties, electronic items will become important to any researcher into reading habits.

Results

At Home/At Other Places. At Home (Table 2.1) Newspapers, Books, Schoolwork, and Magazines were the most frequent responses for both groups, Beginners and Veterans. Children's Items and Non-book Items were reported by more than two persons in both groups. Mail and Electronic Items were reported by one person in each group.

At Other Places (Table 2.2), Non-book Items was the only category reported by more than half of both groups. Magazines, Schoolwork, and Books were selected by more than two persons in each group. Work Items, and Newspapers were each reported by more than one person in one or both groups.

A comparison of categories common to both tables (Books, Newspapers, Magazines, Schoolwork, Non-book Items) shows that Beginners and Veterans read more things At Home than At Other Places. The only common category more often chosen At Other Places was Non-book Items. Intuitively this is not surprising, as schools, workplaces, and the public domain are rife with directional signs, notices and devices as well as information which is posted, flashed, and otherwise displayed almost everywhere.

By combining the numbers for At Home and At Other Places in each common category of Tables 2.1 and 2.2, another view of the data is obtained. In this view the reading materials most often reported were Books, Non-Book Items, Newspapers, Schoolwork, and Magazines.

Beginners/Veterans. There were more similarities than differences between Beginners and Veterans within the categories of materials they reported reading At Home and At Other Places. Similar numbers of Beginners and Veterans reported that they read Books, Newspapers, Magazines, Non-book Items, Mail, and Electronic Items at home. Only in Schoolwork and Children's Items were there differences of more than one in the number of Veterans and Beginners reporting that item.

At Other Places (Table 2.2), the similarities were not as great. There were differences of more than one person in the following categories: Books, Newspapers, Schoolwork and Work Items. Only Schoolwork showed a difference both At Home and At Other Places, with Veterans reporting it nearly twice as often as Beginners in both locations (nine to five At Home and six to three At Other Places).

Discussion

The Children's Items category At Home was chosen more often by Veterans but this may not have been a difference of reading habits so much as a difference in demographics. Twice as many Veterans as Beginners had dependents and the Veterans' group had the Beginners' group outnumbered 17 to 6 in children (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Thus, it would be logical for Veterans to report reading Children's Items two to three times as often as the Beginners based on demographics alone. The difference in Work Items At Other Places may be informed by the number of Beginners who were working, (eight, compared to only six Veterans) but this may not be a complete explanation.

Over half of the Veterans reported reading Schoolwork both At Home and At Other Places while less than 50% of the Beginners did so. This

difference may well be a function of experience, with the Beginners having attended ABE courses for only about four weeks of which two were testing and orientation. The Beginners may not have adjusted their reading habits to include schoolwork. Also, they may not, at that time, have been receiving a full load of homework. The instructors, aware of high dropout rates, may have been easing the students incrementally into the workload to give them a chance to adjust to a faster pace. This category of reading would only serve to differentiate Veterans from Beginners while they were enroled in ABE or some other educational program. Once the students left school, the category would cease to be an indicator of differences between Veterans and Beginners.

A number of students expressed concerns during their interviews that the instructor might be informed about the lack of attention to Schoolwork revealed during our discussions. This resistance to homework may well be a carry over from their grade school days and habits (Ziegahn, 1992). It could be expected that adults doing upgrading would attend to Schoolwork regularly and vigorously to obtain their goals and make effective use of a special opportunity. Instead it appears that poor study habits of childhood influenced the adults.

The Newspaper category was the most frequently reported of all. This is consistent with the findings of Sharon (1974) who also reported that newspapers were bought or provided in the workplace, a finding contrary to this study which reports nearly universal newspaper reading At Home and very little At Other Places. This may reflect changes since the Seventies as in 1990/91, newspapers were delivered before 6:30 A.M.

whereas in Sharon's decade, the papers were delivered to homes in the late afternoon.

Rachal and Leonard (1991) reported that approximately two-thirds of his 217 ABE and General Education Diploma (GED) adults read newspapers and/or magazines, while 95% (21 of 22) of the people in this study reported reading Newspapers alone. This study also found a higher incidence (85%) of Book reading than did Rachal and Leonard.

The findings in this study do not correlate with Sharon's respecting the categories of Books and Magazines. Sharon reported less than 40% of his sample selected books and/or magazines. Over 80% of this sample reported reading Books (17 of 22) and over 60% read Magazines (13 of 22) At Home. Over 40% of the sample (9 of 22) also reported reading Magazines At Other Places.

Magazines were more consistently selected by both groups At Home and At Other Places than either Books or Newspapers. At Other Places this may have been due to the greater availability of magazines in offices, at work, and in waiting rooms than either books or newspapers. Many people brought Books from home to read on the bus or during breaks. These would have to be bought or borrowed, which involves some personal effort, and taken along on purpose whereas magazines were there for the browsing, could be accessed without premeditation, and need not have been purchased to be enjoyed. There is a greater variety of magazines than newspapers available in the public domain and newspapers are more quickly dated. Newspapers have to be purchased daily which will deter some people. Offices and waiting rooms seldom contain current newspapers, and an old paper is not as attractive a choice as an old

magazine, especially an old magazine which is of a type one seldom gets to see.

Question 2: Time Spent Reading

Not every person reported an amount of time spent reading for every item s/he mentioned in response to Question 1. When a response to the question 'What do you read?' was Everything, it was difficult to quantify the amount of time spent per day reading everything which caught the eye. Also, answers such as 'a few minutes' or 'a quarter hour every couple of weeks' involved some interpretation.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 (Page 47, 48) include the same categories as Tables 2.1 and 2.2. The total time reported reading within a category was divided by the number of respondents, which is 11 for both Beginners and Veterans.

For example, the category Mail in Table 3.1 shows a single Veteran reporting some time spent reading Mail but the time recorded for that category (two minutes) is the mean for the group of Veterans (22 minutes reported by the one person divided by 11). Such reductionism distorts the data and must be interpreted with care. This method of reporting was chosen because it is consistent with methods used in other studies reported in the literature. Using the same method allows comparison of the findings in this study with theirs.

The numbers recorded in the second and fourth columns of each table is the mean number of minutes per day reported in association with items in that category. For example, in Table 3.1 within the category of Books, 10 Beginners reported reading items in the Book category but the 11 Beginners in the group averaged 76 MPD reading Books. Only 10

Veterans reported items in the Book category but 11 Veterans averaged 46 MPD reading Books.

When an item was reported as being read but no amount of time was specified, one MPD was recorded for that item. When a range such as 10 to 20 MPD was given, the median was used - in this example 15 MPD. When a group's total reading time for a category was less than 11 minutes, the entry on the table is shown as <1.

The mean reading time, in minutes per day, was found for each group by adding up the means for each category. The numbers at the bottoms of columns two and four in each table represent the total minutes per day for that group. In Table 3.1, each Beginner and Veteran is reported as reading for a mean of 165 minutes per day when all time categories are summed.

Results

At Home/At Other Places. The commonly selected items reported At Home in Table 2.1 (Newspapers, Books, Magazines, Schcolwork) lead in time spent over all other categories (Table 3.1). Books were reported to be read for 76 MPD by Beginners and 46 MPD by Veterans. Newspapers took from 23 to 37 MPD and Magazines from 15 to 16 MPD. A category peculiar to studies of adult students is Schoolwork, which placed second in amount of time read at 39 to 44 MPD. Children's Items came fifth, followed by Non-book Items, Mail, and Electronic Items.

Table 3.1

Mean Number of Minutes Per Day (MPD) Spent Reading - At Home

	Group [a]			
Category	#B	MPD	#V	MPD
Books	10	76	10	46
Newspapers	10	23	10	37
Magazines	6	16	6	15
Schoolwork	4	44	6	39
Non-book Items	3	2	3	4
Children's Items	2	2	4	21
Mail	1	<1	1	2
Electronic Items	1	1	1	1
Mean MPD Per Group		165		165

Note. Numerals in #B and #V columns refer to number of people reporting time within a category. #B = Beginners; #V = Veterans.

[a] n = 11 for each group

Table 3.2

Mean Number of Minutes Per Day (MPD) Spent Reading - At Other Places

	Group [a]			
Category	#B	MPD	#V	MPD
Books	4	5	2	11
Newspapers	2	<1	0	0
Magazines	3	1	3	1
Schoolwork	2	16	6	53
Non-book Items	9	17	9	23
Work Items	2	7	1	5
Mean MPD Per Group		47		93

Note. Numerals in #B and #V columns refer to number of people reporting time within a category. #B = Beginners; #V = Veterans.

[a] n = 11 for each group

At Other Places, the results were different (Table 3.2). Schoolwork was clearly the dominant reading category in terms of time spent. Non-book Items were second, Books were third, followed by Work Items, then Magazines, with Newspapers last. Just three persons (14 of the sample had jobs) reported amounts of time spent reading Work Items and that only amounted to a total, for all three persons, of just over two hours per day.

By combining the categories common to both settings, a different view of the data was provided. In terms of total time spent reading while ignoring the number of persons in each category, Schoolwork was read the most, followed by Books, Newspapers, Non-book Items and then Magazines.

Beginners/Veterans. Data in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 reveal that Beginners spent more time than Veterans reading Books and Schoolwork At Home while the Veterans spent more time At Home reading Newspaper Items, Non-book Items and Childrens' Items. At Other Places the Veterans outread the Beginners in Schoolwork, Books, and Non-book Items while only Work Items were read more by the Beginners. This suggests some differences between Veterans and Beginners. However, though the Beginners spent more time reading in the Books and Schoolwork categories At Home, the Veterans exceeded the Beginners in these categories At Other Places.

Veterans spent far more time with Children's Items but only four of the 11 in the group reported doing so. Nonetheless, if an ABE student was observed spending more than 20 minutes reading with children on several occasions, that person was more likely a Veteran than a

Beginner. Similarly, in the school library setting, a person observed reading schoolwork for periods of 30 minutes or longer on several occasions might well be a Veteran.

In the home setting, it would appear that the Beginners spent considerably more time with books than Veterans, and the Veterans spent more time with newspapers. These categories are perhaps more useful discriminators within this study as the majority of both groups reported selecting and spending time with the Books and Newspapers categories.

Combining these categories, Beginners outread the Veterans by 81 to 57 MPD when Books were involved. Veterans spent more time with Schoolwork, reading in this category 92 MPD to the Beginners' 60 MPD. Two other combined categories reveal Veterans reading for longer per day than Beginners, Newspapers (37 to 24 MPD) and Non-book Items (27 to 19 MPD).

It is difficult to differentiate Beginners and Veterans At Home using total reading time for all categories as both groups reported a mean total of 165 MPD. However, At Other Places, the Veterans read 93 MPD compared to the Beginners who read only 47 MPD.

Discussion

The data in Table 3.1 lead to a modification of some of the views gained from Table 2.1. For example, in Table 2.1 it was noted that more Veterans reported reading in the category Schoolwork than did Beginners. In Table 3.1, however, only six of the nine Veterans who reported reading in the Schoolwork category actually gave an amount of time in doing so. Was this because they felt they should say they did schoolwork, or did they do so little as to not report a time for it?

One of the Beginners also failed to provide a time for Schoolwork At Home.

There was also a need to modify the view of newspaper reading generated from information in Table 2.1. It was noted that Beginners more often reported reading Newspapers than did Veterans but an examination of Tables 3.1 and 3.2 shows that those Beginners spent considerably less time with Newspapers At Home than did the Veterans, (24 MPD compared to 37 MPD). At Other Places, the Beginners who actually read newspapers put very little time into it at all (about five minutes each), perhaps just browsing headlines at newsstands or reading a single article, such as a horoscope, during a break.

A comparison of Tables 2.2 and 3.2 reveals a clear change of ranking in the categories in terms of time spent reading in each category. The items most often reported as being read in Table 2.2 are not the ones read for the longest time in Table 3.2.

The ABE students in this study appear to be on a level with Sharon's (1974) college juniors who read about 157 MPD in all. Students in this study read about 165 MPD just At Home. If the At Home and At Other Places reading times shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are combined, Beginners and Veterans exceed Sharon's college graduates in daily reading time (Beginners 212 MPD, Veterans 258 MPD).

This finding may not be as significant as it appears because the amount of time spent reading does not necessarily reveal the quality of that reading. Poor readers take longer to read a given item than good readers whose rate of reading and comprehension levels result in getting more from the item in less time. As Kirsch and Guthrie (1984) stated,

"simply reporting the amount of time the average person spends reading provides little in the way of substantive information" (p. 230).

The popularity of reading probably has little or nothing to do with reading ability. Anderson et al. (1988), Check & Toellner (1984, Greaney (1980), and Moffitt (1992) all agree that reading is a popular activity for people of all ages in a great variety of circumstances. This study lends support to that position but, although popularity is a common element, it did not differentiate more skilled Veteran readers from Beginners who were less skilled. It may not be the act of reading which is significant. It is more likely the what and why of reading that makes the difference.

Nell's (1988) conclusion that "newspaper and magazine reading appear to be unrelated to reading ability" (p. 14) illustrates the point. Both types of material are widely popular. They can be skimmed or digested, attended to or neglected and no one will know the difference. They contain something for everyone: stories, pictures, games, ads, headings, glitz and glamour. One can pretend to be a reader with them; they can be used as public tokens of reading ability, with no risk, for they provide the appearance without the test.

This is not to say that all readers of newspapers or magazines are faking it, just that faking it is possible. Who checks up on a person's rate of reading or comprehension vis-a-vis a newspaper? A public gaff over knowledge of a current event tends to be seen socially as a lack of political savvy rather than as a literacy dysfunction.

Guthrie et al. (1986), Mikulecky (1981), and Sharon (1974) all reported far more minutes spent reading on-the-job than this study

reports, which could, in part, be explained by the demographics. The people in this study were full-time students and part-time workers for the most part, when they had jobs at all. Guthrie, Mikulecky and Sharon studied people who were working full-time. Nevertheless, this study recorded hardly any time spent reading Work Items, though 14 of the subjects were employed. Many people today seem anxious about upgrading reading skills to meet the demands of an increasingly technological work place. The kind of jobs held by the subjects in this study did not require much reading (i.e. waitress, labourer, counter staff).

The people studied herein compare favorably to Smith's (1990) graduate and professional category of readers in time spent reading in that he reported 180 to 300 MPD reading. The Beginners group in this study spent a mean of 212 MPD reading while the Veterans reported 258 MPD.

It could be asked, 'Why are these people registered in adult basic education?' They read the same categories of materials for just as much time per day as do graduates and professionals studied elsewhere. Do these ABE students differ from the other groups in place and purpose for reading rather than in reading skill? Apparently the graduates and professionals do a lot of reading in association with their work and on the job. The ABE students in this study preferred to read at home and reported very little job-associated reading. They were like Rachal and Leonard's (1991) ABE and GED students whose least reading was job-related. Perhaps they cannot Read to Do, an area of great difference noted by Mikulecky (1981) when comparing technical school students and blue collar workers, the students displaying almost no capacity for this

reading purpose. Reading to do involves functional literacy. It may be that functional reading ability is part of what differentiates persons who achieve professional job status from the ones who do not.

Do ABE programs address these lacks? Do ABE programs even acknowledge these lacks? Hayes and Valentine (1989) pointed out that ABE program practitioners were surprised to be told that their ABE students' need-to-learn list was almost the inverse of what was being taught. They further pointed out only a low correlation between reading ability and functional literacy. Are institutions teaching what ABE students need least?

Question 3: Purposes for Reading

The purposes for reading were categorized in association with the items reported as being read in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Purposes for reading were listed down the left side of Tables 4.1 and 4.2 while the items read were listed across the top. The number of responses were calculated rather than the number of persons making a certain response. For example, in Table 4.1, the Beginners' groups recorded 19 responses to the purpose of reading For Entertainment, eight under Books, five under Newspapers, five under Magazines, and one under Non-book Items.

Categories of Responses

The following categories of purposes were generated from the responses received to the question: What are the main purposes for which you read At Home? At Other Places?

1. For Entertainment. This category includes responses such as for pleasure, for leisure, to pass the time, for recreation, for fun, and for relaxation.

2. For Education. Items read for the purpose of doing classroom assignments, for homework and to practice were categorized as For Education. People reported reading books, newspapers, texts, references, non-book items and children's items For Education. Several people reported reading items, often children's items, to practice the things they were learning to do in class.

3. For Information. The items read For Information purposes were often related to health. Pamphlets, brochures, advertisements, signs, labels, coupons, and notices were among the things read For Information At Other Places (Table 4.2). Pamphlets, books, newspapers, magazines, mail, and electronic items were accessed At Home (Table 4.1). The response, "Because it was interesting" was included in For Information.

4. For Direction. This category is different from For Information in that responses recorded herein were related to receiving direction to get somewhere or to do something. Many of the people interviewed were concerned with finding their way around and reported using maps, signs, addresses and bus schedules to gain direction. Directions for doing things include loose or solitary recipes (not cookbooks), labels, assembly instructions, manuals of operation, and invoices.

5. For Children. This category almost always included helping children do schoolwork and/or learn to read and involved items chosen by the children for reading. One response was about electronic media, a computer purchased for family use clearly refering to child use.

6. For News. Items read for the purpose of keeping up with things, reading the headlines, snooping into society's doings, as well as reading community, local, regional, national and international news were

categorized here. When the purpose for reading a newspaper was related to sports, comment, news, horoscope, births, deaths and such things as are regular informational features in a newspaper, the response was categorized as For News.

7. For Culture. This category includes reading drama, poetry, music, cooking, religious, ethnic, and societal items for purposes that were reported as relating to culture.

8. For a Challenge. People challenged themselves to read items never before attempted to test their newly acquired reading skills. These were non-book items.

9. To Do a Job. A few people reported reading items for the purpose of doing their jobs. These included reading recipes, invoices, purchase orders, and articles. One person was a volunteer but considered the work to be a job.

Results

At Home/Other Places. Table 4.1 reveals three professed purposes for reading At Home with which more than half of each group identified, and another five professed purposes to which less than half of each group subscribed. The three most reported purposes were For Entertainment, For Information, and For Education. For News and For Culture were reported less often than the first three but more than For Children. For a Challenge and For Direction were only reported once each.

Table 4.1

Purposes for Reading - At Home

	Type of Material Read (by Group)									
	BKS	NWS	MAG	SCH	N-B	CHI	MAI	ELE	TOT	
Category	B V	B V	B V	B V	B V	B V	B V	B V	B V	
Entertainment	8 8	5 4	5 5		1 0	0 2			19	19
Education	2 5	1 0		4 3	2 0	1 2			10	10
Information	1 1	8 7	1 3		1 1		0 2	1 0	12	14
Direction			0 1						0	1
News		5 8							5	8
Culture	3 3	0 1	1 1		0 1		1 1		5	7
Children						2 3		0 1	2	4
A Challenge					1 0				1	0
# of Purposes	14/17	19/20	7/10	4/3	5/2	3/7	1/3	1/1		

Note. Numerals refer to number of responses per group. BKS = Books; NWS = Newspapers; MAG = Magazines; SCH = Schoolwork; N-B = Non-book items; CHI = Children's Items; MAI = Mail; ELE = Electronic Items; TOT = Totals; B = Beginners; Group; V = Veterans' Group. Blank spaces indicate no responses.

Table 4.2

Purposes for Reading - At Other Places

	Type of Material Read (by Group)											
Category	BKS		NWS		MAG		SCH		N-B		WOR		TOT	
	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V
Entertainment	4	1			2	4			3	4			9	9
Education							2	3					2	3
Information	1	0			1	2			8	6			10	8
Direction									3	2			3	2
News			2	0									2	0
Culture					0	1							0	1
To Do a Job									2	1			2	1
A Challenge									1	0			1	0
# of Purposes	5/1		2/0		3/7		2/3		17/13					

Note. Numerals refer to number of responses per group.

BKS = Books; NWS = Newspapers; MAG = Magazines; SCH = Schoolwork;

N-B = Non-book Items; WOR = Work Items; TOT = Totals; B = Beginners;

V = Veterans' Group. Blank spaces indicate no response.

At Other Places (Table 4.2), only For Information and For Entertainment were reported often by both groups, the Beginners giving For Information more often than the Veterans. The other five categories were seldom mentioned.

The design of these tables permits a broader view of reading purpose in that they relate purpose to reading material. In Table 4.1 (At Home), Books, Magazines and Newspapers are the items most often read For Entertainment. Books and Schoolwork were read For Education while Newspapers were the only reported source For News and the main source For Information. Table 4.2 (At Other Places) gives a different view, with Non-book Items and Magazines being selected For Entertainment more often than were Books. Non-book Items were often used For Information At Other Places contrasting sharply to Newspapers read For Information At Home.

At Home, Books, Newspapers, Magazines and Non-book Items were read for more purposes than other things. At Other Places, Non-books items were read for a number of purposes. Schoolwork items were reported read At Home and At Other Places only For Education, while the other items (except Newspapers At Other Places) were read for more purposes.

Beginners/Veterans. Beginners and Veterans gave the same number of responses For Entertainment (19) and For Education (10) At Home and For Entertainment (9) At Other Places. When the At Home and At Other Places common categories are combined, the two groups are virtually identical in the responses of For Entertainment (28), Education (12,13), Information (22), Direction (3) and News (7,8).

The Veterans reported For Information, For Culture, For Children and For News as purposes for reading At Home more often than did the Beginners. At Other Places the Beginners more often reported For Information and For News as a purpose. When the At Home and At Other Places common categories are combined the Veteran group more often gave For Culture and For Children, while the Beginner group gave For A Challenge.

Looking at the number of items identified by each group for a single purpose, the Beginners named six items (Books, Newspapers, Schoolwork/Home, Non-book, Children and Schoolwork/Other Places) in association with For Education while the Veterans only named four items. Under For Culture, the Veterans named six items to the Beginners three.

Examining how many purposes each group associated with a given item, the Beginners reported more purposes for reading Non-book items (For Entertainment, Education/At Home, Information/Other Places, For Direction/Other Places, and For A Challenge) while the Veterans reported more purposes for reading Magazines.

Discussion

Over 90% (20 out of 22) of the people sampled in this study read At Home For Entertainment. This finding contrasts with Sharon (1974), where only 54% of the respondents reported reading for entertainment or leisure. Even in other places, 54% (12 out of 22) of this sample reported reading For Entertainment. If enjoyment of reading were the criterion, the ABE students in this study would compare favorably to professional workers (Ribovich & Erikson, 1980).

The number of responses given for reading At Home compared to those given for reading At Other Places suggests that reading At Home is a more significant activity for both groups. Both Beginners and Veterans appear to read more items for a given purpose At Home and have more purposes for reading a given item as well. For example, the For Information category At Home (Table 4.1) has six types of items identified as read for that purpose while At Other Places (Table 4.2) For Information involves only three types of items. At Home, Books were reported to be read for four purposes while At Other Places Books were read for only two purposes.

It is difficult to interpret why over half the Veterans reported so much time spent reading For Schoolwork (Table 3.2) yet so few gave For Education as a purpose for reading (Table 4.2). Few Beginners gave that response either, though all of them attended educational classes every week day. It is possible that both groups over-reported For Education in Table 4.1 and then under-reported it in Table 4.2. It could be that reading in class for 'school' purposes was seen as so obvious a purpose as to need no reporting, and respondents assumed the interviewer would include that as a given response, or so obvious they neglected to mention it. It may also be that classwork is not perceived as reading or as education. As Ziegahn (1992) suggested: "participation in adult education is not synonymous with learning" (p. 46), but may be perceived as a means to an end such as a job. Or, perhaps, reading in class is thought of as work.

There were several persons who commented about their lack of reading For Education during the interviews, e.g., "don't tell my

instructor how much time I spend reading novels. She'll kill me!", or "don't tell my instructor how little homework I do." At times, it seemed they were there for a grade or a diploma, not for learning. Perhaps this explains the discrepancies between the reading For Schoolwork and the choosing of For Education as a purpose.

The Beginners displayed similar inconsistencies At Home. Nine (Table 2.1) report reading For Schoolwork though only four (Table 3.1) gave any amount of time reading Schoolwork, with more of them (Table 4.1) choosing For Education as a purpose for reading.

For Entertainment and For Information were reported to be the most often stated purposes for reading in several studies (Check and Toellner, 1984; Forlizzi, 1990; Ribovich & Erikson, 1980; Rice, 1986). These purposes showed up in this study as well, both At Home and At Other Places, as the most reported purposes. (For Education can be excluded when comparing this study to other studies which did not include students in the sample.)

Similar to all other populations reported in the literature, this study revealed ABE students reading a variety of materials for differing amounts of time for many different purposes. The differences between Beginners and Veterans noted thus far are slight and not compelling. Is this because "Adult literacy training programs have failed to produce the life-changing improvements in reading ability that are often suggested by published evaluations of these programs" (Diekhoff, 1988; p. 39)? Or, was the sample size too small and, though there <u>was</u> a difference, it could not be discerned? Perhaps an incremental difference of only 23 weeks (Tables 1.1 and 1.2) at the Centre was too

short a time to produce any discernable differences in reading habits between the two groups.

Once again it is useful to compare information in the tables for Question Three with that in other tables. In Table 3.1, only four Beginners and six Veterans reported reading For Schoolwork At Home, while in Table 4.1, each group gave For Education 10 times as a purpose for reading At Home. Further, in Table 4.2, Veterans reported For Direction twice as a purpose for reading At Other Places but no Veterans indicated an amount of time spent reading For Direction in Table 3.2. Finally, 10 persons in each group gave an amount of time spent reading Newspapers in Table 3.1 but there were only five Beginner and eight Veteran choices For News from Newspapers as a purpose in Table 4.1. For Information and For Entertainment are reported nearly as often as For News in the Newspaper column.

The information in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 suggested, possibly, some different reading habits developing amongst the Veterans. They seemed to be reading to learn, both in time spent and in numbers of persons involved, more than were the Beginners. Over 50% of the Veterans reported reading for some time in six categories (Books, Newspapers, Magazines, Schoolwork At Home; Schoolwork and Non-book Items At Other Places,) while more than 50% of Beginners reported reading for some time in only four categories (Books, Newspapers, Magazines At Home and Non-book Items At Other Places). The Veterans read for almost twice as long per day in other places as did the Beginners (93 MPD to 47 MPD) with most of the difference being in reading to do schoolwork. If this difference were supported by the data on purposes for reading in Tables

4.1 and 4.2, a fairly strong case could be made, but it is not. The Veterans' main purposes for reading At Other Places were For Entertainment and For Information, not For Education.

The two groups were really very similar in reported purposes for reading. The only difference which stands out is in reading For Culture. The Veterans reported this purpose more both At Home and At Other Places.

Question 4: Where Reading Materials Acquired

Categories of Responses

There are six categories of where students acquired materials read At Home and five categories for materials read At Other Places. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 record the number of responses for the following categories:

1. Bought. If an item was bought and taken home or to other places for use by the purchaser, it was recorded in this category. Items subscribed to and delivered in the mail, or by someone other than the purchaser, were placed into the category Delivered to Home. Both new and used purchases were included under Bought.

2. Public Library. Reading material acquired from public libraries for home use or used in the library during a family visit were recorded in this category.

3. School Library. Some people borrowed items from the school library for use At Home to do homework, to read to the children, or for leisure reading.

4. Delivered. Reading items delivered to home or to work, whether subscribed to or not were recorded in this category. They included

magazines, newspapers, fliers, non-personalized mail, purchase orders, and books.

5. Other People. People trade, borrow, and share reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, books, recipes, songsheets, humor, patterns, maps, and references. Any item reported as received from another person, whether family in the same household or elsewhere, friends, neighbours, work mates or acquaintances were entered here.

6. Free. Many things to read can be acquired without cost or additional cost in the public domain and in the workplace. Pamphlets are found in waiting rooms and on bulletin boards, product labels on purchases give information about contents or directions for use, advertisements line buses and bus shelters. Street signs, license plates, addresses, bus schedules and maps, recipes on cereal boxes, hunting regulations, items browsed at newsstands, and public electronic messages were placed into this category.

Results

At Home/At Other Places. Nearly all the Beginners and Veterans bought new reading materials such as books, newspapers, and magazines for use At Home. All the Veterans and over half of the Beginners had materials delivered to their homes. Both groups reported receiving items from other persons on a loan, trade, or gift basis. Public and School Libraries were a source of materials for less than one-half of the total sample. More Beginners accessed material Available Free for reading At Home (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Sources of Reading Materials - At Home

	Type of Material (Acquired by Group)											
	BKS		NWS		MAG		N-B		CHI		ELE	
Category	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V
Bought	6	5	6	5	6	4			1	2	0	1
Public Library	5	4							1	1		
School Library	4	4							0	1		
Delivered to Home			3	7	2	4			1	0		
Other People	4	7	1	0	4	2	2	0	1	0		
Free	2	1			2	0	4	0				

Note. Numerals refer to number of responses per group. BKS = Books; NWS = Newspapers; MAG = Magazines; N-B = Non-book Items; CHI = Children's Items; ELE = Electronic Items; B = Beginners' Group; V = Veterans' Group

Table 5.2

Sources of Reading Materials - At Other Places

	Type of Material (Acquired by Group)									
	BKS		NWS		MAG		N-B		WOR	
Category	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V
Bought	1	1			1	0				
School Library	5	4	1	0						
Delivered at Work									2	1
Free	1	0			1	3	9	7		

Note. Numerals refer to number of responses per group. BKS = Books; NWS = Newspapers; MAG = Magazines; N-B = Non-book Items; WOR = Work Items; B = Beginners' Group; V = Veterans' Group

Far fewer people reported sources for items to read At Other Places (Table 5.2). Only two categories, Available Free and School Library, were reported more than twice by either group. Table 5.2 reveals no major differences between the two groups as only School Library was accessed by one group more than the other (with a difference of more than one).

Books, Magazines and Children's Items for use At Home were acquired from more sources than the other items by both groups. At Other Places, only Books from School Libraries and Non-book Items Available Free were reported in any numbers. The most popular sources of materials for use At Home were Bought and Other People. Delivered to Home and Free were next, followed by School and Public Libraries.

Beginners/Veterans. Looking at the number of categories reported often by the two groups, the Beginners' group accessed five sources (Bought, Public Library, Delivered to Home, From Other People, Available Free) and the Veterans' group only three (Bought, Delivered to Home, From Other People). The Beginners selected Free Items, Bought Items, and From Other People more for home use than did the Veterans who only exceeded the Beginners in items Delivered to Home (Table 5.1).

It would appear that the Beginners accessed more sources and in greater numbers than did the Veterans for home use giving 65 source responses to the Veterans' 49 source responses At Home and 19 to 15 source responses At Other Places.

Beginners and Veterans were similar with the exception of items which were reported Free and Delivered to Home. Veterans reported considerably more items Delivered to Home (11 to 6), specifically

Newspapers and Magazines. Beginners accessed more Free items (8 to 1), particularly Non-book Items. At Other Places the Beginners reported more Non-book Items in the Free category as well, while Veterans more often reported Magazines in the Free category.

When At Home and At Other Places categories are combined, a difference in the Bought category favors Beginners by 21 to 18 responses. For both groups, the items accessed most often and from the greatest number of sources were Books and Magazines, regardless of setting. While Veterans appear to have acquired Books from Other People more often than did Beginners, the Beginners accessed Other People more often for Magazines and Non-book Items.

Discussion

Neither Beginners nor Veterans seemed to go to much trouble or expense to acquire reading materials for use in other places (Table 5.2). This suggests that reading in other places may be less purposeful, less intense and/or less frequent than is reading at home. Data in Table 4.2 supports this supposition in that the only common purposes for reading in other places given by at least half of each group are For Entertainment and For Information.

There are few discernable differences between groups in either the categories or the columns of Table 5.1. The most obvious differences between Beginners and Veterans are that Veterans acquired more Newspapers and Magazines via Delivery to Home, and Beginners accessed more Free materials, especially Non-book Items. These differences suggest that Veterans were perhaps more committed to specific materials in that they had made the effort to have specific items delivered for

regular use at home, while Beginners tended to access Free Non-book Items whenever and wherever they became available.

Several studies (Guthrie et al., 1986; Mikulecky, 1981; Sharon, 1974) reported that reading in other places, especially at, or in association with, the work place, exceeded, in amount and importance, the reading done at home. Literacy, of concern to Southam (1987) and to every level of government in Canada as well as to most employers, is a term which very much involves reading competencies within the public domain and in the work place. Forms, manuals, reports, and guides are found everywhere which require functional literacy. Why did people from this sample not report purposes or sources from such domains?

One explanation might be that functional literacy skills were required intermittently for short duration. Tasks such as enroling at the Centre, applying for student loans, doing tax returns, reading leases, and filling in application forms occured only now and then, sometimes less than once per year. As this study focused primarily on daily and weekly reading habits, these intermittent categories may have been overlooked or unconsciously excluded by the volunteers.

A second explanation could be that these ABE students lacked the skills or did not attend to tasks which required functional literacy to perform. Though never verbalized, this may be precisely the reason they had enroled in an ABE program. Many may have had support systems in place whereby a spouse, a friend, a sibling, or a confidante acted for them when such tasks needed attention. Because they were attended to by someone else they were not thought of as needs or reported as acts (Hayes and Valentine, 1989).

A third reason may have been because reading habits were categorized in peoples' minds as related to books, magazines and newspapers. Therefore forms, applications, memos, and reports which may have been associated with work and the work place or with legal requirements would seldom have been reported in a study of reading habits. This may also relate to the mind set about school assignments in Adult Education not being synonymous with learning as reported by Ziegahn (1992). If reading was something one did for pleasure to pass the time and titillate the senses, then required reading may have been considered synonymous with work.

Support for the above three explanations is suggested by the responses to the prompt cards (Appendix B) during the review part of the interviews. Several people reported a lot of reading relative to using computer indexes or games, as well as reading for collecting things and for playing board games after seeing the prompt card suggestions. They had not thought of these activities as reading activities, having categorized them as playing games, locating materials, doing assignments and working on collections. The reading component of each task was buried in the task itself. This is perhaps true of a lot of functional literacy tasks. They are buried in a larger activity and classified within peoples' minds not as reading but as the task itself (e.g., completing a tax return, doing homework, or playing a game).

Borrowing, lending, trading, and the giving of books as gifts as well as sharing subscriptions to newspapers and magazines amongst neighbors, friends and family members are common activities in western society. The response to the library categories of Table 5.1 and 5.2

did not meet this researcher's expectations. It was thought that the Veterans would access the libraries more than was, in fact, reported and certainly more than would the Beginners. Libraries are free, easily accessible to students, and rich in reading materials, so increased use by newly awakened readers was anticipated. This expectation was not fulfilled; rather it appears that Beginners used the libraries more often than the Veterans.

It could be that library use becomes a source of anxiety because it is associated with assignments and the pressures thereof and, hence, it would make sense for Veterans to avoid the place except to do assignments. Beginners would not necessarily make that association.

Ziegahn (1992) identifies a certain dread amongst ABE students about attending school again. Some of them may have been discouraged, defeated, even rejected by the schools of their youth, and those old images and feelings returned as they entered ABE programs which resembled, to some degree, the schools they had attended. If library use had been, and still was, associated with that dread, it would not have been overcome or modified by simply increasing exposure to the library in a school setting and library use would not increase unless the associations with the library became more positive. If, as Forlizzi (1990) postulated, reading activities are for pleasure/leisure, then ABE candidates who have a dread of schools and schooling will associate reading with bookstores and friends more than with libraries. These associations appear to be reflected in the data in Tables 4.2 and 5.2. The relationship between reading skill and library use needs to be investigated further.

A second anomaly, or area of concern, was the dominance of Beginners in the number of sources identified and the numbers of people accessing those sources. Here too, the expectation was that Veterans would have developed more "positive reading attitudes" (Smith, 1990; p. 58) and habits than the Beginners. However, except for items Delivered to Home, the Beginners equaled, or exceeded, the Veterans in all categories At Home and At Other Places (disregarding differences of one between the groups in any one category). Differences in demographics or in interview format did not provide any reason for these findings.

Question 5: Most Important Reading

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 record the number of people who gave a response but only a single response per person was permitted. The respondent named the type of reading considered most important and that single response was recorded. Therefore 11 responses are found in the Beginners' and the Veterans' columns in Table 6.1 but for Table 6.2, fewer than 11 responses were given. All the categories on these tables except Entertainment Items have been described above. Two persons stated that the most important reading they did in places other than home was the reading they did for "enjoyment" and for "pleasure". The word entertainment was used to label this category to be consistent with the For Entertainment category in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Since for Questions 5 and 6, only one response per volunteer was recorded, they show smaller numbers. For these two questions it was decided to assign some significance to differences of one within categories, because one represents about 5% of the sample in these tables whereas previously it generally represented less than 1% .

Table 6.1

Most Important Reading - At Home

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
School Items	5	4
Newspaper Items	3	1
Magazine Items	2	1
Children's Items	0	2
Books	1	3

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting a category.

Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans

[a] n = 11 for each group.

Table 6.2

Most Important Reading -

At Other Places

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
School Items	1	3
Newspaper Items	1	1
Magazine Items	1	1
Directional Items	2	1
Informational Items	2	1
Entertainment Items	2	0

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting a category.

Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans

[a] n = 11 for each group.

The difficulties in responding to a question asking a person to identify what kind of reading is most important were discussed in Chapter 2. Most important varies with purpose and setting and a person will have difficulty choosing a single response without having time to reflect and judge. During the last part of a 30-minute interview, reflection time was not always sufficient.

Results

At Home/At Other Places. Everyone gave a response for Table 6.1 but only 16 provided a response for Table 6.2, nine Beginners and seven Veterans. More categories (six) were listed for At Other Places, Table 6.2, than for At Home (five). There were three categories common to both settings, School Items, Newspaper Items, and Magazine Items, resulting in eight different categories overall.

No category received 50% or more of the choices, either by a group or in aggregate. School Items was most commonly identified both At Home and At Other Places. Newspaper Items and Books followed by Magazine Items and Children's Items completed the choices At Home. Directional and Information Items are followed by Newspaper, Magazine, and Entertainment Items At Other Places.

Beginners/Veterans. More Beginners responded in six categories, three At Home and three At Other Places. The Veterans were dominant in two categories At Home and only one At Other Places, three categories in all.

For Veterans, the most important kinds of reading involved School Items, Books, and Children's Items. For Beginners, the categories were

School Items, Newspaper Items, and then Magazines, Directional, Entertainment and Informational Items chosen equally.

Discussion

This question does not, in fact, deal with reading habits. Rather, it was formulated to give an idea of the students' attitudes toward reading.

Smith, in 1990, found that adults in the 35-49 age category were "unlikely to have been taught metacognitive reading strategies while in school" (p. 57). This may have been a factor with some of the volunteers for this study in which six persons were age 35 to 49, but for most of the respondents, the question was probably too limiting.

Some of the respondents commented during their interviews that while they were attending ABE classes, schoolwork was the most important reading they were doing, but afterwards, some other kind of reading would be their most important. When one of the students was asked what reading s/he would do if s/he was only allowed to read one item, s/he answered without hesitation, "My horoscope".

The acceptability of schoolwork as a choice or response may well have limited the findings from this question, providing a snapshot of a very temporary condition instead of insight into more permanent conditions. In replicating the study, one might ask, "Other than schoolwork, what reading is the most important for you?"

Though all of the responses seemed to be short term with no one mentioning analytical, computer or content reading however much these competencies rate attention in the media and literature, the results are not inconsistent with the research. Book, newspaper and magazine

reading consistently rank as most important amongst North American populations and, if the School Items responses are disregarded, those are the categories most important to the groups in this study.

Comparing information in Tables 6.1 and 3.1, it is interesting that only one Beginner reported Books as the most important reading At Home when ten Beginners had reported reading Books for 76 MPD. Another question arises when five Beginners reported School Items as most important in Table 6.1 but only four Beginners reported spending time reading Schoolwork in Table 3.1. The importance seems not necessarily to relate to how much effort was put in to the activity by the individual. Importance perhaps attached more to the perception (whether one's own perception or to one's idea of what others perceived) than to the performance (Nell, 1988). The Veterans did not display these inconsistencies.

The questions, "What kind of reading is the most important to you at home? At other places?" were far too general and left the respondents too many alternatives to consider. One response in this study was to make no answer; another observed response was the random choosing of one of the many alternatives which came to mind in order to provide a response, knowing that that response was arbitrary and inadequate.

Also, in asking for the most important reading, all the popular choices tended to be disqualified and the respondents appeared to try to focus on the less frequent/less enjoyable reading tasks. In a short interview, adequate reflection was not always possible, and some people responded not at all.

Question 6: Still to be Learned

Categories of Responses

Only one response per person was permitted to the questions: What is the most important reading you still have to learn for use at home? At other places? Table 7.1 contains responses from all 11 Beginners and all 11 Veterans. However, Table 7.2 contains fewer than 11 responses by both groups. The following categories were generated from the responses:

1. Comprehension. Responses such as getting the meaning, understanding the main idea, being able to read more things were categorized as Comprehension.

2. Vocabulary. When words or meanings of words or the need for more words was in the response, it was categorized as Vocabulary.

3. Word Usage. Though this could have been labelled vocabulary, the responses here had to do with using words in written or spoken messages in a correct and acceptable manner. This difference in emphasis seemed significant enough to be labelled separately.

4. Other Reading Skills. Some people indicated they wanted to be able to read faster, with more expression, to scan material, and to be able to attend for longer periods. Such responses were grouped here.

5. Technical Skill. This category included the need for skills to do a job, to read political material, to understand technical text such as found in astronomy books, to get a promotion, to read historical material, and computer literacy.

Table 7.1

Reading Still to be Learned - At Home

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
Comprehension	3	3
Vocabulary	3	4
Other Reading Skill	3	2
Technical Skill	1	1
Personal/Social	1	1

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting a category.

Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans.

[a] n = 11 for each group.

Table 7.2

Reading Still to be Learned - At Other Places

	Group [a]	
Category	Beg	Vet
Comprehension	1	0
Word Usage	0	2
Other Reading Skill	2	1
Technical Skill	3	1
Personal/Social	1	0

Note. Numerals refer to number of people reporting a category.

Beg = Beginners; Vet = Veterans.

[a] n = 11 for each group.

6. Personal/Social. Some responses did not categorize well. One was expressed as a need to be socially more apt, perhaps to impress friends and family. Another had to do with taking vacations and using travel information better. The third response was everything.

Results

At Home/At Other Places. There were 22 responses to Question 7.1 and only 11 to Question 7.2. Reading skills such as comprehension and vocabulary were the popular choices with little difference between groups. Only four persons identified other kinds of reading which they needed to learn. These were in the Technical Reading and Personal/Social categories.

Again, responses for the At Other Places part of the question were not provided by everyone. Only 50% provided a response, seven Beginners and four Veterans.

It was hoped that respondents would identify a personal goal such as being able to read a greater variety of novels, or better understand legal text, or become competent at reading manuals for the work place. Instead, the people tended to respond according to the emphasis in the courses they were taking, selecting comprehension and vocabulary, terms belonging to their instructors.

Because the categories are the same for both Table 7.1 and 7.2, it may be informative to use aggregates. Doing so, Vocabulary was the most often chosen (nine times); Other Reading Skills selected eight times; Comprehension seven times; Technical Skill six times, with Personal/Social selected three times.

Beginners/Veterans. Beginners chose responses in this order: Other Reading Skill, Comprehension and Technical Skill, Vocabulary, and Personal/Social. The Veteran order was Vocabulary, Comprehension and Other Reading Skill, then Technical followed by Personal/Social.

Discussion

It would appear that reading skills needed At Other Places were of less concern than those required for reading At Home, especially among Veterans. In both Questions 5 and 6, all the respondents provided responses to the At Home part of the question, but only about 60% provided responses for the At Other Places part. This suggests that home reading was of more concern or more real than reading elsewhere and that respondents were more able to make metacognitive responses about their reading At Home.

All the tables show greater responsiveness to reading at home. Both the Beginner group and the Veterans' group spent much more time per day reading a greater variety of materials At Home than they reportedly did At Other Places. Yet, the Veterans, who reported twice as much time spent reading as did the Beginners At Other Places (Table 3.2) were not as able to respond to Questions 6.2 and 7.2 in as great numbers as were the Beginners.

Further evidence of a lack of metacognition may be seen in the responses to Questions 6. Most of the respondents named a reading skill emphasized by their instructors such as vocabulary, comprehension and rate. These results may have been due to fatigue during the last part of a 30-minute interview. Or they may reflect a temporary condition in that the setting and focus on schoolwork at that point of time in their

lives led to a predisposition to answer from an institutional rather than a personal point of view. Smith (1990) suggested "that many people have inaccurate ideas about what skills are essential for being a good reader" because they "are unlikely to have been taught metacognitive reading strategies while in school" (p. 57).

This finding may be related to the differences between the perceptions of ABE students and those of literacy practitioners who set the curricula. The emphasis placed on skills deemed to be less important to ABE students and the absence or dearth of instruction in areas perceived to be needed most (Hayes and Valentine, 1989) could easily lead to uncertainty amongst ABE students about what they really need for success. When asked what type of reading they still needed to learn, students may have chosen to reply with what their instructors implied was important rather than with what they, themselves, were most concerned about.

Few of the respondents appeared to have any clearly defined goals vis-a-vis reading habits or even what kind of reading was important to them and why. Only one person felt improved reading skill would help achieve job advancement. Others, who sought technical skill, identified the reading of health-related brochures, learning about astronomy and following directions for building models as most desirable. Though they were all registered in an ABE Centre and they had all stated a work-related purpose for enroling, there appeared to be a serious lack of certainty about any need for improved reading skills, and little appreciation for the role reading plays in almost all aspects of contemporary living.

The Review Using Prompt Cards

Only 12 persons participated in a review of Questions 1, 3, and 4 using the prompt card (see Appendix B), eight Beginners and four Veterans. Time constraints made the review impossible for the others. Because of the smaller sample and the unequal numbers, inclusion of these results in the study would be confusing. However, a discussion of general findings follows and provides further insights.

Results

All of the persons who used the prompt cards reported a lot of new information respecting materials read, time spent reading, and sources of materials. Six of the twelve prompt card users added as much or more new information during the review as they had in the original interview. They had either overlooked certain types of items in their original interview or had not perceived such items as reading materials. These 12 certainly under-reported the items read, the time spent reading, and the sources of reading materials during their first interviews.

Most of the additionally reported items were read At Home. The prompted reviews generated an average of nine previously unreported items read At Home, and an average of two items read At Other Places. Increased reading time was reported as well, from 5 to 27 MPD, depending upon the group.

A previously unreported category of materials showed up clearly in the review, materials created or collected in the home. Created materials, reported by five of the twelve reviewers, included scrapbooks, baby books, journals, notes, memos, and/or diaries. Three

persons reported collecting coins and/or stamps which involved using catalogues to classify and evaluate the collected items.

Eight Beginners added an average of nine items read At Home to their unprompted responses, and an average of 1.5 new items read At Other Places. Five of them added time spent reading At Home. Three of them added as much or more information as they had reported in their original interviews. Three of the eight Beginners reported creating or collecting At Home.

The Veterans also added nine At Home items on average, while At Other Places, they added 2.25 items per person. All four of the Veterans who did the prompted review added time spent reading, increasing their groups' previously reported times by 27 minutes per day. Three of the four added as much or more information as they had reported originally. Three of the four reported creating or collecting things At Home.

Nine of the 12 prompted persons added sources of reading materials to their previous responses, the most common being Bought and From Other People. Previously unmentioned items such as phonebooks, maps, electronic items, coupon, labels, T.V. guides, and/or dictionaries were each reported by six or more of the twelve reviewers.

Discussion

Although the prompted review data cannot be included in the tables for this study, they should not be ignored. In addition to clearly indicating the magnitude of the under-reporting of reading materials, time spent, and sources of materials during original interviews, the amount of new information generated when using prompt cards suggests a

perception problem. The new items reported were perhaps not perceived as reading materials by a majority of the 22 students (over 50% of the prompted group reported new items) and were therefore unreported in the original interviews. It was feared that using prompt cards might bias the data. Some form of prompt or definition to begin the interviews would likely have resulted in a more consistent perception of what constituted reading matter. The question "What things do you read at home?" assumed that everything read would be reported which did not turn out to be true. "Future studies should examine the role of readers' perceptions in guiding reading behaviours" (Smith, 1990; p. 58) and the reporting of that behaviour.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This cross-sectional study was undertaken in an attempt to ascertain differences in reading habits between short and long term students who were enroled in an adult basic education program at a Centre in a large urban setting in Alberta. This chapter will provide an overview of the study followed by conclusions, recommendations, and implications which can be made on the basis of the results.

Overview of the Study

This study was designed to compare Beginner and Veteran adult basic education students on what they read, the time spent reading, why they read, the sources of their reading matter, what they viewed as important to read, and what they wanted to learn to read. Twenty-two adults who were enroled at Levels 5 to 9 in an Adult Basic Education Centre volunteered to participate in the study, 11 who were just beginning and 11 who had completed 18 or more weeks of study.

Using six, two-part, open ended questions, the volunteers were interviewed at the Centre. Their responses were written down as well as recorded electronically by the interviewer. Categories were derived and defined within the response set for each of the questions, and tables were developed for use in comparing and contrasting the Beginner and Veteran groups. In four of the tables the number of <u>people</u> per group who gave a response within a category was recorded. The other two tables compared the groups according to the number of <u>responses</u> each group provided within the categories. The results were presented and discussed for each of the research questions posed for the study.

comparing the data by setting (At Home and At Other Places) and by group (Beginners and Veterans).

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn with care. These were self reported data from a very small sample in a single location.

Total Sample. The groups of people who volunteered for this study were very similar to most groups used in other studies reported in the literature (e.g. Moffitt, 1992; Ribovich, 1980; Rice, 1986; Sharon, 1974). They reported reading as great a variety of materials for as much or more time each day for similar purposes and acquired their reading materials from similar sources.

The ABE students, all of whom had reading levels below what is generally considered necessary for functional literacy, reported reading books, magazines and newspapers as frequently as did readers studied elsewhere (e.g. Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985; Legrand-Brodsky, 1979; Rachal and Leonard, 1991; Rice, 1986; Sharon, 1974). They generally devoted three to four hours per day to reading, with times ranging from less than one hour to more than eight hours per day (e.g. Guthrie et al., 1986. Rice, 1986; Sharon, 1974). Reading Books occupied more time per day than magazines and newspapers combined (e.g. Nell, 1988; Rice, 1986). Their most frequently reported purposes for reading were For Entertainment and For Information, the same purposes reported by North Americans generally (e.g. Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985; Guthrie, 1979; LeGrand-Brodsky, 1979). These ABE students buy, borrow, share, and create reading materials at rates indistinguishable from other populations (e.g. LeGrand-Brodsky, 1979; Rachal & Leonard, 1991;

Ribovich & Erikson, 1980). Though this conclusion appears to contrast with lay opinion about the reading habits of ABE students, such people are, in fact, readers and do a lot of it.

Only in work-related reading did this sample vary from others. Very few persons reported reading on-the-job and those who did spent only minutes rather than hours per day doing so. No one identified work-related reading as most important nor as yet to be learned. Other researchers consistently reported that groups in their studies engaged in work-related reading for hours every work day, often for more time than was devoted to reading at home (e.g. Guthrie et al., 1986; Mikulecky, 1981; Sharon, 1974).

This sample very much prefered reading at home, for entertainment and information. At Other Places, fewer materials were read for far less time and less purposefully than was reported At Home. Only Non-book Items were more commonly reported At Other Places. Signs, notices, license plates and pamphlets were read For Information and For Direction away from the home setting which is not surprising.

The amounts of time spent reading reported in this study were considerably higher than those reported by Rachal and Leonard (1991), who also studied ABE populations. Rachal and others who reported reading times generally found less time spent reading than this study reports except in the category of work-related reading. There were too few studies of reading habits amongst ABE students to draw any definite comparisons but it seems evident that ABE students are not a homogeneous population, locally or nationally.

Beginner/Veteran Comparison

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 compare Beginners and Veterans according to their most common responses presented in Tables 2 to 7. In the first section of Table 8.1, the items most commonly selected for reading were listed beside the number of minutes per day devoted to reading each category of material. Next the three most popular purposes for reading were listed in order, followed by the four commonest sources of material. Finally, the leading categories from Tables 6 and 7 were listed.

Beginners/Veterans. From information in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 the Veterans and Beginners were almost indistinguishable in either setting. The total reported reading times At Home (Table 3.1) were identical though slight variations showed up in specific categories.

Veterans reported spending less time per day reading Books and more time reading Newspapers At Home, though the number of Veterans reporting either material was the same, or nearly the same, as the number of Beginners who reported doing so. More Veterans reported having reading materials Delivered to Home, and there was some indication that Veterans more often read For Culture (Tables 4.1 and 4.2) and read Magazines for more purposes than did Beginners. Far fewer Veterans than Beginners reported reading Free Items At Home.

At Other Places, more Veterans spent more time reading Schoolwork. Veterans were more likely to report Schoolwork as the most important reading they did At Other Places while Beginners more often reported Non-book Items as the most important reading At Other Places.

Table 8.1

Beginners/Veterans Comparison - At Home

		Group Responses	
Table	Category	Beginners	Veterans
2.1 (number of people/	Books	10/76 MPD	10/46 MPD
3.1 minutes per day- MPD)	Newspapers	11/23 MPD	10/37 MPD
	Schoolwork	5/44 MPD	9/39 MPD
	Magazines	6/16 MPD	6/15 MPD
4.1 (number of responses)	For Entertainment	19	19
	For Information	12	14
	For Education	10	10
5.1 (number of responses)	Bought	19	17
	From Other People	12	10
	Delivered to Home	6	11
	Free	8	1
6.1 (number of people)	Schoolwork	5	4
	Newspaper	3	1
	Books	1	3
7.1 (number of people)	Comprehension	3	3
	Vocabulary	3	4
	Other Reading Skill	3	2

Table 8.2

Beginners/Veterans Comparison - At Other Places

		Group Responses	
Table	Category	Beginners	Veterans
2.2 (number of people/	Non-book Items	9/17 MPD	9/23 MPD
3.2 minutes per day- MPD)	Books	4/5 MPD	2/11 MPD
	Magazines	4/1 MPD	5/1 MPD
	Schoolwork	3/16 MPD	6/53 MPD
4.2 (number of responses)	For Information	10	8
	For Entertainment	9	9
5.2 (number of responses)	Free	11	10
	School Library	6	4
6.2 (number of people)	Schoolwork	1	3
	Non-book Reading	6	2
7.2 (number of people)	Word Usage	0	2
	Other Reading Skill	2	1
	Technical Skill	3	1

The minimal differences in reading habits between Beginners and Veterans in this study suggest that long term participation in ABE programs does not result in substantive changes in the reading habits of individuals in other than school settings.

Recommendations for Further Research

1) This study should be replicated using a larger number of subjects and a larger difference between groups in terms of time in the program. Contrasting by age and gender is also recommended.

2) In a replicated study the prompt cards should be used in a review format for all interviewees and the resulting data analyzed and compared to that obtained using open-ended questions.

3) The reasons why students use libraries should be investigated. Is there a relationship between educational level and library use?

4) What factors limit or block library use for some people?

Follow up to instruction and practice are factors reported to affect the retention of newly-learned reading habits and skills. Certainly the availability of materials for follow up has a bearing on how much practice is done.

5) Is there a correlation between reading ability and the willingness to access the available sources for reading materials?

6) Do readers with higher levels of reading achievement access more sources of materials than those with lower levels of reading achievement?

7) Differences between the findings in this study and a reported study of ABE students by Rachal and Leonard (1991) indicate a need for further investigation into time spent reading by ABE students.

Nearly all the studies reported in Chapter Two herein relied on self-reported data which can be problematic as previously indicated.

8) Qualitative techniques should be used to verify self-reported data in future studies of reading habits.

Implications

The ABE students interviewed for this study were in the intermediate levels of upgrading yet were reading a variety of materials for significant amounts of time when they enroled. When asked which reading was most important to them and what they still wanted to learn, several from both groups had difficulty responding and, when they did, the answers were often institutional (Tables 7.1 and 7.2), particularly about what they wanted to learn.

1) ABE instructors and program planners should give attention to metacognitive awareness of reading skills and help students to clearly articulate their goals for attending ABE programs. Every effort should be made to facilitate a match between institutional and personal goals.

2) Adult Basic Education students should be taught metacognitive reading skills.

3) Follow-up practice for ABE students should be actively encouraged and positive introductions to new (for them) sources of reading materials should be made.

This study found little difference in reading habits between Beginners and Veterans which could be correlated with long-term participation in an ABE program. Only in reading schoolwork at the Centre did the Veterans differ markedly from the Beginners. People from

both groups cautioned the interviewer not to reveal their lack of attention to reading for coursework (see pages 42 and 60) and others revealed an attitude that reading for coursework was required but not of major importance. Newly acquired reading skills did not appear to develop into new reading habits.

4) ABE Institutions should realize that there is as much need for changes in student attitudes about reading as there is for changes in skill levels if newly acquired skills are to be transferred to the home and to other places

Concluding Statement

The results of this study indicate that long term participation in an adult basic education program in a large urban setting did not significantly influence the reading habits of the students. Out of thirty categories of comparison (Tables 8.1 and 8.2), only in three were there differences of any magnitude between Beginners and Veterans, and two of these differences concerned time spent reading, a factor which may be explained as much by lack of reading ability as by long term participation in an ABE program. The third difference was that Veterans had more materials delivered to their homes, a difference which probably existed before any of the volunteers enroled in the program. Perhaps more differences will show up when studies are done using a larger sample, but in this study long-term participation did not influence reading habits except that more Veterans spent more time doing Schoolwork than did Beginners.

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APPENDIX A

THE INSTRUMENT

We are trying to find out what kind of reading habits people develop while taking adult basic education courses at [ ]. We want to know why you read, what you read, and where you get the things you read. There are no right or wrong answers so please tell me, in your own words, about your own experiences. I will write down your answers as best I can and also record what you say to make sure I write things correctly. No one else will hear what you have said, or read what I have written. The recording will be erased after the study is completed. Are there any questions?

1. What things do you read at home? At other places?
2. For how long do you read each item you have listed?
3. What are the main purposes for which you read at home?
   At other places?
4. Where do you get the things you read in your home?
   At other places?
5. What kind of reading is the most important for you at home?
   At other places?
6. What things do you still need to learn to read at home?
   At other places?

Name _____ I.D.#_____ Gender____

Age____ Married?____ Number of dependents? _____

Occupation_____ How long? _____ Income_____

Last school grade completed____ XXX program_____

Level at XXX_____ How long have you attended?_____

11 December 1990

My Dear Colleaques:

Your assistance and support is being sought by another pesky graduate student trying to cope with the requirements for professional life by doing a thesis project. This study has been given permission by Dr. _____. My name is Philip Sansom. Dr. Grace Malicky is my supervisor in the Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education.

I am proposing to interview (see the attached Instrument) ABE (not ESL though) beginners and veterans in an attempt to ascertain changes in Reading Habits related to educational experience. It is hoped that twenty or more beginning students, and a similar number of veterans (40+ in all), would be willing to meet with me privately at the Centre during non-classroom times for about thirty minutes each. I will ask each of them several questions about what they read, why, and for how long, and record their responses. Participation is voluntary and responses will be kept completely confidential and anonymous.

WOULD YOU PLEASE PROVIDE ASSISTANCE BY:

1) identifying appropriate ABE students from your classes (not ESL).
   -those who are newly enroled at Levels 5, 6, 7, 8, of 9; and
   -those who have advanced two or more levels during their enrolment at the Centre and are now in Levels 5 to 9.
2) providing those identified with a copy of the **"Invitation to Participate"** letter provided and then collect the consent forms.
3) return the completed consent forms to Dr. _____ promptly.

I plan to conduct the interviews during the period January 8, 1991 through January 18, 1991 in the hours between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.. Is it possible to have the consent forms to Dr. _____by December 21?

Thank you so much for your help and Merry Christmas to each of you.

Your sincerely,

Philip Sansom

Please do not share the Instrument with potential volunteers.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Student:

My name is Philip Sansom. I am a student at the University of Alberta. I am doing a study to find out how people change their Reading Habits as they learn and grow.

To find out this information, I plan to talk with 20 or more students who have just started an adult basic education program, and another 20 students who have been in an adult basic education program long enough to complete two or more levels of learning.

You can help greatly with this study. If you **volunteer** to be interviewed, I will arrange to meet with you privately here at the Centre for a talk. You may withdraw at any time. Your answers will be kept confidential and nothing in my report will ever identify you or any other volunteer.

Interviewing will be done between **11:30 A.M.** and **4:00 P.M.** (you may choose) during the days from **Tuesday, May 21. 1991** to **Friday, May 24, 1991.** For evening students, evening hours will be arranged. **An interview takes just 30 minutes.**

If you think you would like to volunteer, please fill in the consent form below and return it to your Instructor. I will contact you to arrange a good time.

Sincerely,

Philip Sansom

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP WITH THIS STUDY

NAME:_____ INSTRUCTOR_____
please print

TELEPHONE NUMBER_____ LEVEL_____

Best time for interview for me (11:30 a.m. to 4:00) is **DAY**_____

TIME_____. Evening interview preferred at _____

SIGNATURE _____ Date signed_____

APPENDIX B

The Prompt Cards

WHY PEOPLE READ

to do things	to help others	OTHER
to decide or choose	to help themselves	
to learn about things	to communicate	
to enjoy themselves	to remember things	
to handle money properly	to understand legal matters	

HOW PEOPLE GET READING MATERIALS

BUY IT	BORROW IT	CREATE IT	GET IT FREE
books	library	notes, memos	forms
magazines	friends	recipes	advertising
newspapers	from work	signs	mail
guides, maps	from school	scrapbooks	phonebooks
posters	from family	diaries	bus schedules
other	other	other	other

WHAT PEOPLE READ

texts	manuals	guides	stories
magazines	newspapers	scriptures	letters
notes	memos	schedules	signs
maps	homework	forms	indexes
labels	phonebooks	dictionaries	recipes
fliers	TV written news	TV guide	thermometer
tax forms	applications	leases	mortgages
coupons	menus	advertisements	instructions
graphs	tables	charts	OTHER